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STRANGE

STORIES;

*A LITTLE LIFE,
A LITTLE METAPHYSICS,
A LITTLE LOVE,*

by J. WALLACE HOFF.

JUN 18 1908

SOME STRANGE STORIES.

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A LITTLE LIFE,

A LITTLE METAPHYSICS,

A LITTLE LOVE.

— ✓
By J. WALLACE HOFF.
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“WHETHER, in that spirit-land where our immortal natures still live after their earthly tabernacles have crumbled to their original clay, they have any knowledge of or interest in the affairs of the world which they have left behind, we do not know; it has not been revealed to us.

* * *

“The faculties and powers of the soul—especially memory—the strong affections of the heart, all belonging to and constituting an inseparable part of its spiritual nature, as well as its unwearying activity even while the body reposes in soundest slumber, render it, to say the least, a reasonable conjecture that, though engaged in moral and intellectual employments and enjoyments much nobler and purer than earth’s, they are still spectators—interested, curious spectators—in the works of God’s providence which relate to his moral creation.

* * *

“In spite of ourselves, we are all, more or less, believers in the communion of spirits. The man who has entirely cast off this prejudice or superstition, if we please to term it so, has lost one restraint which has been known to exert its salutary influence when even the sense of higher accountability has been disregarded.”—SHARSWOOD.

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FELIX MONDET.

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FELIX MONDET was a dreamer.

I do not mean to say he was not a worker, for he was. He worked for the realization of his dreams,—Position, Power, Riches; for the attainment of those outward evidences of success that characterized his older friends, the Doctor, the Professor, the Judge, the Diplomat, and which evidences always stood before his eyes as the most desirable of worldly possessions.

With these practical aims Felix was still a dreamer. Though by no means an idler, yet, at twenty-eight, while to outward appearances he was on the highroad to success according to the accepted idea, to himself he admitted that he was at a standstill.

He was a plodder, inasmuch that he met and conquered. He did not look from an elevated position to command, to turn to account, to manipulate. Possibly he lacked continuity of purpose, for together with his pursuit of the law he coupled other ventures, in commercial lines, which he thought, and his friends thought, would prove of the greatest money-making value.

Previously, he had seldom stopped to think. Now he was at a critical point in his existence. He thought. His exact feelings he could not fathom. His business career confused his early training.

His mother, from his youth up, had sought to instill in him Truth, Sobriety, Charity. She was a strong-minded woman. Quick to see and to execute; apt to bear up under adversity; ambitious; a woman with all a woman's instincts and reasoning, which Felix had never analyzed.

He owed fifteen years of his training to her. The training bears its fruit.

His father was steady, plodding, successful. To him Felix gave little heed. In fact, in reasoning they never could agree,—his father and he.

Felix Mondet, therefore, could not account for his state of uncertainty. He tried to succeed. He thought he believed. He thought he had a purpose. But on the verge of thirty he was beginning to find himself all at sea. He felt that he was losing ground, but why?

With his increase of ventures, his entire time was taken up. He became straightened out only to get again tangled and involved in his dealings. Withal he became suspicious, morose. Persons he thought friends were secret enemies; persons he thought truthful, honest, sincere, he found to be deceitful, dishonest, insincere.

He read of, met, and saw, gigantic swindles, rogues, schemes, and,—failures. He wondered at these things—that they should exist. He had never thought of them in conjunction with his friends the Doctor, the Judge, the Professor. They were successful men, as was his own father. They were rich, they were powerful, they were respected. That they should have met with reverses never entered his head. It were impossible.

To himself Felix was an anomaly. Don't misunderstand his feelings. From a good schooling and university education he became first an employee, then a student, a worker, a master. He had reached from a lower plane to a higher. His position was secured.

To the world he was destined to success. To himself, at thirty, he was going to pieces. Strive as though he would he could not rise above his depression, could not see his faults, could not fathom his existence. Could he rely on Astrology? Ancient kings did, why not he? His Horoscope foretold the triumphant sign of Saturn, the protection

of Jupiter, the science of Mercury, the tranquility of the Moon, the riches of the Sun, the charity, passion and tenderness of Venus.

He had left the university with honor, he had busied himself faithfully, relaxed himself reservedly, was expectant for the future. At thirty, of himself he asked, where was his triumph, where his protection, where his tranquility, riches, science?

Felix Mondet was a worldly man. He worked as he believed, that through no other agency than his own efforts was his furtherance and success to be attained. Yet he believed in the Will, the Occult, the Hereafter.

Time after time he had tried to satisfy himself of his bodily condition, its influences, its scope, its future, and disposition. His material self, the matter from whence all things come—what was he? What was he destined for as a collection of molecules? He could trace up to a certain point; had Biblical teachings at his finger's end; saw, heard, believed, and,—what did he know?

He knew who he was, and where he was, but, Whence and Whither?

And so one being worked and thought.

Some time after the point had arrived in Felix Mondet's life to which we have alluded, he returned to his rooms after a day of anxiety, trouble and thought expended upon a knotty legal case. Tired in body and depressed in soul, after partaking of a cup of cocoa, he threw himself down on a divan, before a cheerful fire, and, little heeding material things, was soon in a state of tranquility.

Through the protecting grace of an all-seeing Eye there comes to those in distress, at one time or another, the power of traversing the Dark Plain, of divining Right from Wrong,—a spiritual foresight; a protection.

Characterized as a still, small voice, a Conscience, an inner consciousness, what it is has never been

definitely known. A premonition, a translation. Yes, and No.

At any rate a fathomless transition for Good or Evil; a warning, a help. Not a worldly state, but a release of the astral body from corporeal to spiritual, and thus clearer, vision. A condition of cool, collected, unobstructed, undisturbed sight and feeling—a distinct reasoning being with an acuteness born of a secret Power.

In this condition, past, present and future appear to the adept like unto an open book. Sight and hearing are mysteriously quickened; questions and answers become the medium of a sensible communication.

Once the peace of this state is allowed, revelations the most far-reaching and protective are had. Out of it, sordid realities, hopes, ambitions, defeats—*unless heed be given to the revelations granted.*

Thus, then, Felix Mondet's astral body appeared to his other, and material, self as an interpreter of life's tangled skein.

Apart from his surroundings, he hovered, a watch on men and things, on means and motives, on causes and effects.

He saw a Universe of goodly pretensions endowed with blessings. He saw it inhabited by a people having a correct guidance in clear, honest principles.

He saw Success, and Peace, and Plenty.

Then, ever and anon, through a vision beset with clouds, came glimpses of Discontent, the mother of Strife.

From thence he compassed the world and met with Intrigue and War, Wickedness and Desolation. He saw the baleful fruits of their unhappy machinations; the scattering and breaking up of the strongest tribes, cities, states, empires; he saw one generation wiped out to make way for another; he saw both young and old succumb under the pestilential breath of Sedition and Heresy, while Fire and

Flood and Famine and Disease swept onward, destroying all that lay within their path.

Here and there a few escaped unscathed. These few he saw happy, cheerful, contented. According to the law of survival of the fittest. But why these few?

He was allowed to reason. His friends, the Judge, the Professor, the Doctor, were happy. Others, he knew, were neither happy nor successful. His ideals were, — so he had believed. But now he could see, beneath the calm of the surface, that each was harassed by anxieties, doubts, fears, even greater than his own.

Tenacious of a precarious existence which knew not content, nor ease, nor relaxation, he saw them struggling in the snares of Strategy, Treachery and Deceit, of which they or he had little eked. Of themselves, the Evil Trinity was in them, but Faith, Honor and Compassion, with their attendants, Hope, Mercy and Charity, controlled.

The depressions of the poor and the depressions of the rich he now saw with equal force. They were alike in their heart-sicknesses. There was despairing Squalor about the one and mocking Glamor about the other.

Man's inhumanity to man, the hollow Pomp and shallow Vanity of a wicked world appealed to his vision and opened his eyes to the reality of his earthly surroundings. Clearly, his vision was a warning, but what did it portend?

Then came another aspect. From out of Turmoil and Strife came smiling Good, breathing tranquility of mind, and heart, and body. An eddy in the maelstrom.

With this sharp contrast, this promise of further knowledge, came a desire for a deeper insight and a keener appreciation. He had the Abstract; he wanted the Concrete—would it be given him?

Strive as it might the Spirit of Felix Mondet could not pierce beyond the Veil that lay almost within his reach. Could the Will serve? Could concentration of effort obtain the Prize for him.

The intensity of agony that attended his consuming yearning to penetrate the Great Secret caused beads of white blood to start like pearls from the brow of the material body.

Slowly commenced the return state of consciousness. Would he Know? In his eagerness he groped about, clutching, grasping, dragging at the Veil he could not rend. But a Power greater than his seemed to bar him his desire. The weak worldly vessel slowly regained its ascendancy.

Then began a silent and mighty battle of Darkness and Light. For one instant inky blackness would pall the senses—then Light would triumph, only to be vanquished in another instant. And thus they struggled, the one with the other. It seemed hours to Felix—it was but seconds. At last, as Light seemed about to prevail, it was instantly dissipated. The Darkness grew in intensity. The atmosphere was stifling. Felix gasped for breath. For one instant the air was laden with balmy scents, and then there came a crash as of a world destroying cataclysm.

When the reverberating echo had spent its fury, Felix realized that the boon of sight was no longer his.

He was blinded !

* * *

His Soul quivered in the grasp of Fear, the ghoul of a morbid and over-wrought mind. His fevered faculties contemplated the terror of Unnamable Disaster ; he saw the Pale Reaper.

Was this, then, Death.

* * *

It was Life.

Out of the mist, as if stilled by the violence of the tempest that had passed, there came a Voice, sweet, low, sad, and with the intonation of an inviolate command, saying,

“This do I give unto thee !”

* * *

Once more the sight obeyed the Will.

O, ineffable joy, he could see !

And, as his dim percepts struggled with their poor, mortal weakness, he saw, in a burst of effulgent glory,—this:

“Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

“Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and show mercy unto thousands in them that love me and keep my commandments.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all that thou hast to do ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work ; thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.

“Honor thy father and thy mother ; that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“Thou shalt do no murder.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.”

DAPHNE.

DAPHNE.

“CAPTAIN, I have not yet been told of that dream of yours. You promised to relate it some time ago, and I am afraid you are forgetting me.”

Captain Burdette, an English sea captain, and myself were resting in the cabin of the sloop *William Rhiel*, anchored in a quiet cove on Barnegat Bay, after a day's successful outside fishing. I felt in the humor for what Lem, the mate, called a “snaky” yarn, and proceeded to remind the Captain of a promise made to me sometime before.

It was some minutes after I had ceased speaking that the Captain knocked the ashes from his pipe and raising himself to a sitting position, turned toward me.

As my eyes rested on his features, I perceived a pained look that surprised me.

Before I could speak he began:

“Well, Hal, it is not likely that I would recur to the subject, unless importuned, for to me it is not a pleasant one. However, my depressed feelings, together with our present surroundings, are fit accompaniments to the wierd dream—as you might call it, although now I know from its truth it was no dream—the yarn I promised in a thoughtless moment.”

I knew that the old seaman was subject to spells of melancholia, and would have begged him to forget my idle request, but a second look showed to me that the recital of his story would take a burden from his mind, and leave him in a more tranquil state. So I held my peace.

“The incident I am about to relate taught me a lesson in the doctrine of Infinity, that I shall never again seek to controvert. In another way my error was a result of lack of

experience, so essential to persons placed in an executive capacity. Had I reasoned in the way I now should do, the lives of three persons, I have every reason to believe, would have been free from a great deal of unhappiness and reproach.

“You know when my poor brother died, he left behind him a daughter, about fourteen years old. Her name was Daphne. Although a rough sailor, unused to womankind after my mother’s death, I was designated by him to care for the girl, and to look after her interests. Thus, in a moment, by the quenching of the life of one of my own kin, I became a father—yes, a father, for I will say that no parent ever cherished for his own a fonder love than I experienced toward my brother’s child. For, fostering her in her loss of her father, caring for her in sickness, and thinking of her when far away, she soon became engrafted in my nature, a fiber of my being.”

It was several minutes before he could proceed. I sat in silent and sympathetic waiting.

“She was in her seventeenth year,” he continued, “when I received a message from Liverpool from the owners of the vessel of which I was at that time captain, to prepare for an extensive trading voyage. Thinking that the trip would do the girl good, and knowing that my own mind would be better satisfied if she were with me, I decided to take her along, and made preparations accordingly.

“At home Daphne had always been the girlish belle of the village, but her young heart was as yet untouched by any passing fancy. It was a strange thing to me, then, that her affection should become almost instantly centered, it appeared to me, in the person of an American-born lad, who seemed to be merely a transient visitor to a foreign shore.

“Be that as it may, I had in my crew a bright but harum-scarum young lad, who, although ambitious, I felt would

never amount to a great deal for reasons that I cannot very well define.

“I watched with disfavor the attachment I saw growing up between him and Daphne. Daring to a degree bordering on recklessness, well formed, and of commanding strength, Hewson was just the ideal of a romantic girl who had been sheltered from contact with the world.

“In a quiet way I did all that I could to discourage their evident feelings toward one another, but I saw it grow stronger under opposition.

“One evening, after looking at the many sides of the case, I called Daphne into the cabin, and, as gently as I could, placed the matter before her—my doubts and fears, my interest in her welfare, and other points and reasons for her giving up any idea of a union with the young seaman. After I finished speaking, she sat as one dumb, the conflict of her emotions showing itself only in her heaving breast and glowing eyes.

“At last she gained control of herself as if by a mighty effort, and tearfully pleaded that she might not be crossed in her affection, saying that she could not extinguish her love for Hewson, and that wherever that love might lead her, she could love but him, and die.

“I saw further argument would not avail, and resolved to act. As God is my judge, I did it for the best. I may have done wrong, but my subsequent heartaches and remorse, have more than paid me for my misjudgment.

“At the next port I discharged the young fellow, telling him that his services were no longer needed. Although he begged for an explanation, I offered none; he pleaded with me to retain him, but I was obdurate, and procured for him a berth on another vessel. He went, but I saw that he and Daphne had had an understanding, and I was sorely troubled.

From the time of his departure, Daphne was a different girl. Her spirits drooped, and she became melancholy and

wasted. She was a mute reproach to me. I tried in vain to find a satisfying excuse for my action. I did all in my power to cheer her up. At every port we touched I took her ashore and made extra efforts to surround her with luxuries and comforts. After a time she began to regain her wonted spirits, and, with the exception of a look of resigned despair that hurt me more than angry words could, was quite her old self.

“Even then I did not know the full extent of the wrong I had done, thinking that, as with many of my own air castles, time would soothe and heal her fancied wounds.

“Four months after the discharge of Daphne’s lover, having almost completed our trip, we ran in to Liverpool for supplies and orders. I secured quarters for Daphne at a comfortable inn, and left her to do some shopping and to enjoy herself as she fancied, while I busied myself with my various errands.

“While making a trip about the quays one day, I came face to face with young Hewson. He appeared utterly unaware of my presence and passed on. Inquiring, I learned that he was purser on a composite steamer plying between Liverpool and the Bahamas, and that he was much thought of by his company. For a moment I feared lest he should learn of Daphne’s whereabouts, but, full of my business cares, I soon forgot the circumstance.

“I did not go into town for four days after meeting with Hewson. On the second day I reproached myself for neglecting Daphne, and was on the verge of stopping at the inn, when I received a batch of letters and papers requiring immediate attention. On the fourth day I started out about eleven o’clock in the morning, planning a trip that we should enjoy together.

“The instant I entered the inn a vague feeling of uneasiness seized upon me. I had a presentiment that something was wrong. I hurried to the apartments assigned my niece

only to find them empty. I inquired of the chambermaid if she had seen Miss Burdette.

“‘Yes,’ she had, ‘about ten o’clock the day before, but not since.’

“I stood still a moment, in unspeakable distress, trying to collect my scattered thoughts. Had the unwished for happened? Had a deeper love than my stunted senses perceived asserted itself?

“Calling a hansom, I was driven to the one spot where I intuitively knew I could get the information sought—the steamship company’s office. Hastily entering the agent’s apartment, I asked if any of their vessels had sailed within a day. I was told—

“‘Yes, one had cleared at twelve o’clock the day before, the tide favoring an early departure.’

“My next question would settle all. I asked—

“Did your purser have company on the trip out; a young lady?’

“‘Mr. Hewson? Yes; his wife,’ the agent replied. ‘It was rather unexpected, but he had asked the company’s permission, and I granted him the necessary pass.’

“Like one in a stupor, I turned away. Remorse for neglecting my trust overcame me.

“Calmer thoughts came to me, however, and I began to see wherein I had erred. But I had builded my hopes on a bright future for her, as I knew her private fortune and my own would allow of those luxuries that I so much desired for her. And now?

“Had I only acquiesced, and then endeavored to guide her, she would have still been within my knowledge of her welfare. Oh, how I wished and prayed for her return when explanations would make happiness again!

“That evening, by post, came a letter, the deep pathos of which I can never forget. Daphne had gone, gone with her idol, the daring sailor of her girlish dreams. She hoped and

begged that I would forgive her, for, her letter continued, 'although against your wishes I know I am doing as my heart directs.'

"I cannot describe my feelings. Evreything was blank to me that night as I tossed about on the chairs and bunk in my cabin. I only know that the most earnest prayer I ever made went up for her as I tossed about in feverish suspense.

The next day we weighed anchor, and I left behind me a spot that I shall never recall without regret and self-reproach. Three months later I gave up my command, determined to forget as much as possible my old life and to drown my disappointment in travel. For now I had no object in tying myself down to business.

"Nearly three years from the date of the elopement of my niece, I found myself traveling back to Liverpool, in the interest of my brother's estate. Arriving at my destination, I put up at one of the inns, and after several long and fussy consultations with the solicitors, had nearly finished my business. The next day would wind up affairs, and I expected to start for a trip across the water.

"All day I had an unusual feeling of depression, as if something were about to happen. I am a believer in presentiments, and during my life have had more than one forewarning which proved of vital account in saving my life. But the feeling I experienced at this time was not of a like nature, being rather one of expectancy.

"I noticed it was the fifteenth of October, the anniversary of my niece's marriage. Retiring, I could not sleep for thinking of past occurrences. After awhile I fell into a troubled sleep. I had two or three distorted visions, and then remember becoming partly conscious.

"While in that condition, I plainly and distinctly heard the tolling of a ship's bell. My faculties seemed sharpened by this evidence of existing things, and I could distinctly

see, in a wide expanse of water, surrounded by floating ice, a composite steamer, head to the wind, with yards aback and spilled sails, rising and falling with the motion of the cold, dark blue waves.

“The steamer’s deck, hatches, steering-gear, windlass, and all else, covered with a thick coating of ice, were as plain to me as a startling reality. Spell-bound, as though held by a phantom hand from which there was no escape, I watched for the next act of the tragedy as tolled off by the bell, the mournful tones of which I could still hear.

“Soon there emerged from the after-cabin a group of officers, bearing between them a corpse wrapped in a shotted shroud. With lifted caps, they cautiously trod the ice-covered deck to the long boat swinging from the davits. On the center seats they reverently deposited their fragile burden, and took their places on either side. At the bow, his face covered with his hands, sat a young man. Peering past the fingers as they were buried in the flesh, in my vision I saw, phantom-shaped and ghastly, the features of—Hewson!

“‘My God,’ I moaned, ‘Daphne!’

“The boat was lowered, and with measured stroke and muffled oar, headed for the deep, still waters of a sheltered cove.

“Hal, I watched it all, and, in what must have been a very short space of time, I thought of every incident of that awful drama, from the first act to the last, over which the curtain of death was now rolling.

“The return to the ship, the getting under way again, were all shown to me, and then I awoke with a start, bathed in perspiration. Feeling as though one of my heart-strings had suddenly given way, I clutched at my side and sat upright.

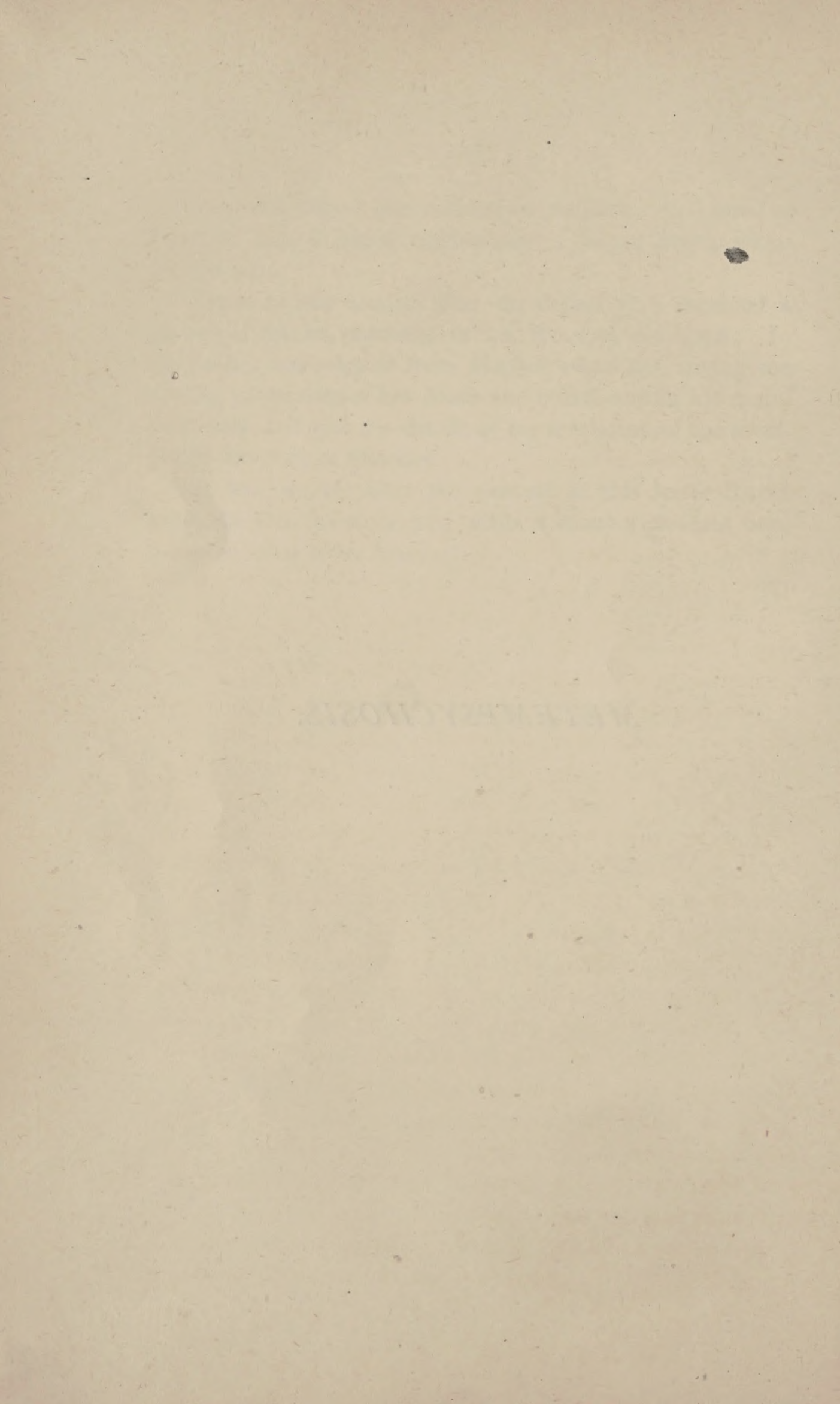
“Upon getting back my full consciousness, I tried to laugh at myself for being so foolish, and, once more laying my throbbing temples on my pillow, sank into a deep sleep.

“The next day, I was inclined to anticipate bad news of Daphne, but, finishing my business, I began preparations for this trip.

“Three or four months after my departure, I received a packet of letters, remailed to me from my old home. In the packet was a letter from Daphne’s husband, giving me the full particulars of her death and burial, and in the main, they coincided with the details of my revelation of the memorable fifteenth of October.

“It was shortly after the perusal of this letter that I promised you the story, and, while it is not a pleasant one, it was to me a bitter lesson.”

METEMPSYCHOSIS.



METEMPSYCHOSIS.

WHAT are the limitations of the human soul? Can it annihilate time and distance? Can it reach through space, disassociated from its human habitation, to stand between harm and those we love?

Do you believe it? I will not say that I do not, because an experience in my life would seem to show that it is true.

But I will tell the story, and you may judge for yourself.

Some years ago, at the time I was "hustling" for business, I was compelled to leave my home for a six weeks' tour in the then not very law-abiding West.

I was loth to leave my home and my wife, for I remember that it was but a short time before the birth of our first child, and I had within me all the anxiety and thought that every father experiences under such circumstances.

However, there was no help for it, so, promising Lillian that I would return as quickly as possible, and bidding her a fond and passionate good-bye, I began the trip.

Stopping in the various towns, seeing faces old and new, and pushing my affairs as well as I consistently could, I had little time to spare. I did not neglect my wife you may be sure, but sent her daily records of my affairs and successes, for the purpose of allaying any fears she might, because of her condition, have on my account.

At last I was free to return, and I joyfully telegraphed home that they might expect me. The whirling wheels were soon carrying me eastward, and you can imagine my buoyant and expectant feelings.

Just as the train had almost reached the town where I was to make my last change of cars, the sudden breaking of

a rod on the engine threw me into despair. The accident occurred some distance outside of the town. The conductor told me he could not say when they would get in; certainly not in time to make the scheduled connection.

To miss that train meant much of which I was fearful. What wouldn't Lillian think about horrible accidents, broken bridges, and the like? Poor girl, how I yearned to be by her side to soothe the nervous excitement I knew she would suffer. The thought worried me almost to desperation.

I ascertained the distance, and calculated that by leaving the train and making my own way on foot I could just about reach the station in time to catch the outward-bound train.

To think was to act. Taking to the road-bed, I struck into a swinging stride and covered the ground rapidly.

In the distance I could see the long, low and dark bridge, leading into the town, which I hoped to reach before darkness came upon me.

But, as the days had been shortening for some weeks, I was unable to do it. It was in a very uncertain light that I left the track and started down the shadowed foot-path of the covered bridge.

The only light I could see was a dull red one, over the track at the bridge entrance, that shed its baleful glare but a short distance before it was dissipated by the surrounding gloom.

At the corner of the street leading into the town the flickering reflection of one dismal gas-light chased shadows across the cobblestones. I welcomed the light none the less, however, though I did not know why.

I glanced at my watch. I noticed that it was seven minutes after eight o'clock. The full red light seemed to suggest muddy blood.

I noticed that a change had come over me.

I became conscious of an oppressive, yet magnified, state that I cannot describe. It was not a feeling of danger, but

one that caused me to forget aught but my surroundings, and to instinctively center my attention.

The lateral draft through the shaft, and the downward draft caused by the flowing waters below, made every little straw and piece of paper stick and scrape in its passage, giving it a pronounced sound in the oppressive silence. At any rate I distinctly remember that my sight and hearing were both nervously acute, and a creeping sensation came over me.

I analyzed my feelings. My head was cool and my brain was calm. No thought or fear of bodily harm disturbed me. I felt as bold as a lion, yet I trembled while I analyzed in vain. I could not understand it.

Nearing the other end of the bridge my mind again reverted to my wife. In the gloom I thought I saw her face drawn, as if in suffering, looking straight at me in supplication and terror.

I looked more intently, puzzled at the phenomenon. There was her face, still before me, and by her side, its chubby cheek nestling peacefully against hers, was a baby's face! My heart stood still.

I stepped toward the vision. The drawn muscles of the face became less tense.

I stepped closer. The look of terror softened; the face relaxed more,—and more,—and disappeared!

I was worried, and heart-sick. What did it all mean?

I thought of the new duties in life that even then might have devolved upon me. In unison with my thoughts my steps quickened.

My mind was wonderfully clear; every faculty was alert, intent. I even noticed that the sounds echoing down the shaft seemed to become a roar

A few feet from the street, without knowing why, I passed close to the wall. The action was the natural one of giving way to a person coming in the opposite direction. But no real person had passed, and, without slacking my speed, I

instinctively turned my head to find a reason for my action.

For the first time I noticed at the end of the bridge a pile of lumber. *It was not in the pathway, but was rather a continuation of the partition separating the tracks from the walk.*

Until I had passed the boxes and barrels that lined the curb, and drew nearer to the welcome light, my short, stertorous breathing was almost akin to suffocation.

Once under the light, I felt a load lifted as if from my very soul. I gave vent to a sigh of relief, but it was not until I got on my train, just as it was moving out, and had left the town far behind me, that I was relieved of the oppressive feeling that seemed to possess me.

After breakfast on the train the next morning, seeking to shake off the slight vestige of my sensations of the previous night that remained after my heavy, dreamless sleep, I bought a paper from the train-boy. I opened it, and ran my eye down the columns.

As I read, I was horrified by a long account of the motiveless murder, in cold-blood, of a prominent minister who, with rare thoughtfulness of his errand, having chosen the early dusk as the time best fitted to spare his protégé from the stare of curious neighbors, was returning home from having relieved the distress of some half-starved young mother who, the paper stated, had been widowed but a few weeks before.

As I read further I saw that the tragedy had occurred on the bridge I had crossed, *the time being cited as fifteen minutes past eight!*

That was the moment I had seen the vision of my wife and the baby face!

My blood seemed to freeze. I suffered agonies, while the swift-moving train seemed to creep at a snail's pace.

Once at my town, I hurried home and into the house, where I was met by the doctor. By him I was told that

while my wife was doing nicely now, she had had a very serious time, and that at one moment the night before they had been fearful of collapse.

I breathed easier.

"The child?" I asked.

"Is well," he answered.

"At what time was that, doctor, that the crisis occurred?" I asked.

The doctor turned to the nurse and looked the question.

"About ten or fifteen minutes past eight, sir!" she said.

"Was that the time the baby was born?" I asked.

The nurse nodded her head in assent.

The doctor had been in constant attendance, and faithful to his trust, impatient as I was, he kept me waiting until he went to Lillian to prepare her for my coming.

When he returned he looked me sharply in the eyes, and felt of my pulse. He shook his head gravely, and said:

"You are very, very nervous. You must be calm."

"Never you fear, doctor, if she's all right!" I answered.

As I entered the room, with its dim light and sacred presence, I felt that another life was there.

Lillian was so rejoiced to see me that, weak as she was, she lifted herself up to greet me. Tears silently welled up in her glad eyes and rolled down her wan cheeks. When she had gathered a little strength she told me in whispers that she had been so sorely troubled for me; that she felt that I was in danger, and that the minute the baby was born her heart almost broke in an endeavor to pull me away from a pile of lumber over which she, in her over-wrought mental state, had thought she had seen a demon-like presence hovering.

I knelt by the bedside, soothing her, and stroking her cheeks, until she became rational again, turning her thoughts to the chubby-faced little fellow who nestled so snugly in

her arms. Poor girl, suffering though she was, she was a picture of beatitude.

It was many months after my return, and when the baby was quite a lusty youngster, that I referred to the coincidences of that eventful night, and as my wife grasped me closer, we both thought—"was it a good Genius who had helped her soul to save me at that supreme moment?"

What was it?

THE SPIRIT AVENGER.

THE SPIRIT AVENGER.

IN one of the most picturesque shires in all England stood Elton Hall, the country seat of Henry Trevering, Esq. From the noise and smoke and fog of London, for longer time than "The Squire" could recollect, his family had been the owners of their present possessions. As a youth he had lived in the country—only paying occasional visits to the town. As a barrister and solicitor things changed, and it was only for recreation that he repaired to Elton Hall to follow the hunt and the ideal life of a country gentleman. At the age of three score and five years, in vigorous health and in the possession of wealth, accumulated even by his fathers before him, Henry Trevering retired with his youthful bride, to end his days at his ease. In Alice Merthon he renewed his youth, and need we wonder that her sudden death was a sad blow to him. After his wife's death, little Alfred, the son of his old age, was left to the uncertain care of nurses and relatives.

The latter, narrow and avaricious, had watched with delight his advancing and childless years. You can, therefore, imagine their feelings at the birth of his only child.

Knowing the disposition of the Squire, and his devotion to traditions, it was an accepted fact that he would leave his estate intact for the benefit of his honored name.

His relatives, however, made repeated attempts to influence him in their behalf. His steadfast refusal turned cajolings into sullen, malevolent actions. Under the continued harassing the old Squire lost his usual buoyancy, and a year after the birth of Alfred, the Squire was gathered to his fathers.

As was supposed, his will left all his possessions to the next in line—his son. A course of education was also laid out, and an intimate friend, a medical doctor, was named as guardian. Further provisions stated that in the event of the death of Alfred Trevering without issue, the property should be equally divided, share and share alike, with those of his kin living at the time of his death.

The guardian, a good, whole-souled man by the name of Mitchell, who resided in the city, unacquainted with the situation, left Alfred in the hands of the family at Elton Hall. To say that the child was neglected, and all but abused, would be needless. Of a sensitive, high-strung nature, it did not take long to ruin his temperament, and he was often subjected to cruel treatment, the cause of which he, of course, had no idea.

After two years of such living and continued neglect, and while Doctor Mitchell was abroad, Elton Hall was closed, and its occupants took up quarters in a crowded portion of London. The change had hardly been made when the country folk received word that Alfred Trevering was dead. The statement was given out that he had contracted a cold during the journey, and, pneumonia setting in, he had not recovered. Doctor Mitchell, being advised of the circumstances, immediately returned home.

Allowing time for the regular transaction of business, the estate of Henry Trevering, as provided in his will, was sold and apportioned.

Elton Hall was purchased entire, by a gentleman of means, who allowed it to remain closed until his return from a sojourn abroad.

Henry Trevering was soon forgotten. But the gossiping country folk, having little else to do, and being somewhat acquainted with the feeling existing in his family, wondered, and wagged their heads at the turn affairs had taken.

Some years after the country seat was purchased, ex-

tensive repairs and changes were made, the new owner moving in with his family, and a retinue of servants and laborers. The old nursery, in which young Alfred used to romp, was given over to two men-servants for a sleeping room.

The new sleeping room had been in use about a week, when one of the men, a most intelligent and faithful man, declared that he was going to leave. He said, from things that he had seen, the house was haunted.

The rest of the household laughing and jeering him, he said no more and shortly afterward left the premises.

Some time after the above occurrence a new hand was hired, the two men retiring as usual, for the night.

As the Hall clock tolled the hour of twelve, John was violently awakened by some one grasping his arm. He saw his companion greatly agitated, staring into the embers of the open fire place.

Seeing John awake the man, ejaculated, "Look, look! Don't you see it?"

And in the faint light, sure enough, he saw a phantom child, carrying a lantern, walking across the room toward the fire place. Although they watched intently, neither one could swear how it disappeared. At any rate, the apparition was immediately lost sight of.

Thoroughly frightened, they arose and made a thorough search, but to no purpose. The absent servant's story was now corroborated, and the servants wondered what the warning meant.

The third night after this the same thing occurred. This time, however, both men were sure that the figure disappeared at a spot directly over the stone hearth. They both noted its long golden curls, and the beseeching look as its eyes met theirs.

The next day the men resolved to pry up the hearthstone. They believed the apparition a talisman of luck, and visions of buried treasure danced before their eyes.

After considerable trouble and exertion this was done, and upon poking about in the loose sand and lime, a child's skeleton was discovered. The skin was drawn like parchment over the frame, a pair of leather shoes were on the feet, and a gold chain was about the neck.

Every one was horror-stricken at the find, and tongues immediately commenced to wag.

The body was turned over to the Coroner, who empaneled a jury to view it. As the body was in a good state of preservation, it was placed in an air-tight casket, and word was sent immediately to Doctor Mitchell. All signs pointed to but one solution of the mystery—that the body was that of Alfred Trevering, and that he had been murdered before leaving the mansion.

Before Doctor Mitchell arrived he had the London grave of little Alfred opened, and found that it contained no corpse whatever.

Leaving word at the police station, and the necessary papers for the arrest of the then living relatives of the Squire, he hastened to identify the body. This he was able to do by the aid of the necklace and a small ring found near the body.

The arrests of the three principals followed, and great excitement prevailed.

Under fear of capital punishment two of the culprits confessed their part in the affair, and were sentenced to prison for a long term of years. The other, against whom was the proof of infanticide, was given a life sentence. Justice was swift and sure, and the chain of evidence was so strong that the verdicts were approved on all sides. Virtually no defence was set up, and the baffled conspirators only wept and plead for mercy—the boon they had refused a little, helpless child.

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

A MIND and action controlled by conscience is a work not to be swayed, no matter what the crisis. A knowledge of the right clothes the outer man in a guise that needs not the task of penetrating. I never appreciated the full force of this until after I witnessed one of the most powerful efforts I ever saw used to break down and to extort a confession from a man accused and convicted of murder under evidences wholly circumstantial. The case came up in the following way.

Late one night a policeman on his accustomed rounds about one of our larger cities, was startled by the rapid approach of a stranger, quite out of breath—who related that a few moments before he had seen a powerful, evil-looking fellow carrying a woman into a broken down and deserted shanty at the end of one of the principal streets. The place located was quite a distance from where the man met the officer, and as his informant said the woman appeared lifeless, the officer sent him on for the ambulance.

Proceeding to the old house, the officer tried the first door and found it locked. As he rattled and tested it with his shoulder he heard a voice within calling for help and begging him to wait until the door could be opened. Instead of opening the door, however, a window was raised and a man's head appeared. The officer immediately covered the man with his revolver, and ordered him to throw up his hands.

The look of terror and horror on the man's face bordered on insanity. Under strong excitement he told the officer how he had been lured to the spot by a request for assist-

ance, and, once inside, the door had been shut and fastened, and the stranger, although locking the door from within, had mysteriously disappeared. As his enticer's footsteps echoed down the pavement a suppressed groan had driven terror to his heart. Approaching the corner from whence the sound came, he had stumbled over a corpse—that of a woman. He was trying to find a way out when he heard the officer at the door.

As the man finished his story the ambulance came up. Both the man and the body of the woman—a dissolute character—were taken to the station. Later, the body was removed to the morgue. The stranger who had given the alarm and notified the ambulance corps, had disappeared.

On examination at the central station the prisoner, well known to the police as a crooked character, repeated his story without hesitation, and appeared deeply shocked by its recital. I was present at the hearing and became interested in the recital of the officer and the story of the accused man, who, after telling his story, was led to a cell to await the action of the Grand Jury, which was sitting at the time.

Later I went home.

Somehow I could not get the matter off my mind. The face of the accused, his manner, and the circumstances, kept coming up and occupying my thoughts, until I was deeply concerned. The more I reasoned and solved the more I thought the man innocent. I could conceive many reasons for this conclusion. I really believed him innocent of crime. Of course, to suspicion any one else would not help. It might have been the stranger who notified the officer—might have been a person totally different from either. The man might have been taken there after the woman was killed and before the officer arrived; or it might have been the accused who was being carried in—as he wore a long cloak.

Casting aside all of these suppositions, I could only be sure of one thing, and that was of the innocence of John Sharpless. The Grand Jury found sufficient grounds—I presume the straightforwardness of the officer's story and the reputation of the man—to indict him for the crime of murder.

It was such a strong case for the State that no one cared to appear for the defense. I thereupon agreed to act as counsel for the accused, and with that end in view and the trying of an experiment, I visited him in his cell. I told him what I intended to do, and immediately his face—sodden as it was from dissipation and evil associations and perforce, inclination—lightened up in a manner that even I was unprepared to see. In full confidence, therefore, he related to me his side of the story. It agreed exactly with the tale as recited by the police officer; agreed with the accused's own story on the night of the murder and before the Grand Jury. Three times repeated, I thought good grounds for truth. Still the life he had lead and his previous court experience might enable him to do this, so I passed it over as of minor importance. What I placed the most hope in was the manner of the man. His sincerity of conscience burst from him with a light that he, of course, did not appreciate. To further play upon this I led him over the details of the horrible experience in a casual way, not allowing him to see through my purpose.

By every means and method I had him repeat and repeat his version of the affair. He seemed at all times anxious to assist me to probe the mystery, and expressed deep sympathy for the fate of the woman. He was under the impression that she was alive, as she had groaned when he was first alone in the room. This had attracted his attention. He said his first impression was that bodily injury was to be done to himself.

When told how the officer came by his knowledge of the

affair, he inquired who the man was ; of course no one knew, but the officer told us subsequently, as best he could from his recollection of the man's appearance at the time. Sharpless, however, could not place him from the description given.

My client was innocent, of this I was certain. The evidence and the feeling—indeed all press criticism, was against him. I felt that there was only one thing, one line on which to work—or rather to effect a combination of defence and prosecution—in order to overcome the prejudice. With this end in view I associated with me Henry Winthorp, a friend who was a great seeker after hidden truths, and who was entirely in sympathy with my own notions of the higher accountability of man. Withal he was intensely practical, a good counselor, and a skilled tactician.

After my conversation and a detailing of my defence, Winthorp himself had a long talk with Sharpless. On the day of the trial public clamor was at its height. That the already popularly condemned man had any ghost of a chance, or was by any means innocent, could not be tolerated for an instant. The trial lasted nearly two weeks, and was a prolonged fight. We had all up hill work, as the prosecution had almost the whole town on their side, and our client had few friends, and those few were detrimental. For my part I answered the prosecution, and threw my whole strength in the fact that a stranger notified the officer, who had no means of knowing who was the murderer, and that Sharpless waited for and admitted the officer which put forth the evidence of truth in his story.

Of course with my colleague and myself this was merely secondary. It was in the summing up that I placed my faith. I had every reason to believe that both jury and accused would hear something that would shake them from centre to circumference. I had read an outline of Harvey's plan of attack, and knew that he had thrown his whole soul into his theme. He believed Sharpless innocent, and

I myself was surprised—nay, even startled at the depth and audacity to which he had gone. Well do I remember that eventful afternoon. It was warm—rather close—but pleasant. Outside the court room the birds sang and the bees droned. Inside, the drawn shades made a shaded light that gave an impressive silence. To add to this Harvey's long, lank figure, clad in a frock coat, gave him a ministerial look. As he arose to address the court his keen black and piercing eyes swept alike over judge, jury, officers and spectators. Assuming a striking attitude, and bending that never to be forgotten gaze on those whom he was about to address, he began. Touching lightly on the line of defence, he began directly at the foundation of the natural law, passing through the various stages of crime and the consequences thereto attached, and finally capped his discourse with that of murder. All the degrees were treated ; all the attributes of the human mind and passions necessary to perform such an act, and then, facing the accused, he delivered at him the most scathing denunciations of the dastardly deed that I ever heard. The silence was deathly in its oppression ; the faces of the jury and spectators were drawn in lines of painful attention and startled intelligence. Never before had a body of men listened to a line of defence aimed to shame the supposed culprit. To their minds it was a complete surrendering of the case to the state, as it virtually accepted the line of prosecution. What did it mean ?

For myself I sat and watched eagerly the effect of the address upon Sharpless. His face was a study. Knowing as I did that not a particle of understanding lay between the lawyer and his client, his features were a revelation to me. From them I could see that, born with a firm knowledge of innocence, perfect faith lay between the two.

Did Harvey draw a picture of the suffering of the dead woman so cruelly treated, the prisoner's face softened and

tears welled to his eyes. Did the lawyer denounce the crime, the prisoners whole expression concentrated into one of approval. Sharpless appeared in every phase as a sympathetic spectator, abhorring the crime and the man accused of it.

Having led his hearers over the pit where they were hovering in breathless silence, each unconsciously nodding and pointing the finger of shame and horror at Sharpless, Harvey, without giving time for that long-drawn breath that must escape before the spectators could recollect themselves, hurled into their firm convictions of guilt a firebrand of innocence. In a loud commanding, and evenly intonated voice, he set each individual hunting for the murderer. Even made John Sharpless forget that he was the accused, and started a tingling of shame on every cheek; even caused a flush to come over the prisoner's cheek as he with the others remembered that he was the one on trial for his life.

Where is that murderer? Cannonaded forth Harvey. Is that the man? Pointing to Sharpless. Rather each one of you (sweeping his arm toward the jury box) than him. You, who have no reason to feel guilt for this crime; you, who have no need to tremble in your shoes for fear of your necks; you are one and all embodied in his expressions, his sympathy, his abhorrence.

Then, in a low, pleading voice, and with outstretched arms in supplication, he said:

"I beg that you find a verdict in accordance with the dictates of your hearts."

After a few words from the judge the jury retired.

They were a long time agreeing. It was a terrible array of evidence against conviction and conscience,—evidence of guilt through circumstance; conviction of innocence by virtue of a higher sense.

But the public clamored for blood.

After a stubborn conflict a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation to mercy, was rendered.

An appeal was unnecessary.

Under the circumstances this was as good as a victory, and we immediately appealed for a new trial.

While preparing the necessary papers we received a remarkable letter, containing a full confession of the murder and account of the suicide in a cheap lodging in San Francisco of a former resident of the place—a being in the same class as the prisoner. In the confession he stated that he was in the court room at the time Harvey delivered his terrible arraignment, and had left after the result of the verdict, in the hopes of forgetting the awful load on his soul.

The burning words, however, and the feeling of guilt reached a place in the hardened criminal's heart that ruined his hopes of peace on earth.

Sharpless was immediately released from custody and, being placed under a good influence, gradually forsook his former habits.

AND THIS IS LOVE.

AND THIS IS LOVE.

RUDOLPH PRESTON was a thinker. Seeing and hearing, to him, were mere incentives toward opening up a train of thought. Reasoning was a natural gift.

From boyhood to manhood, this trait had a prominence that insensibly commanded attention. His baby thoughts produced questions that amused and puzzled his parents. His boyish thoughts and their application were sought for by his companions, to whom they meant the production of some useful appliance, some novel invention, that enabled them to carry out their sports and pastimes in some new and interesting fashion.

Later, as the man, a circle of intimates knew him as one capable of presenting to a cultivated taste papers of rare intelligence, commanding respect for the subject of which they treated. In all cases his articles led up to a delicate higher train of thought, towards the solving of some vexed problem of the day.

In his chosen field of thought he developed a degree of ability that promised great things for his future career.

Rudolph often startled his friends, and even himself, at times, by the far-reaching, psychological manner in which he treated certain things. Certainly, traditions to him were as nothing; facts, all; possibilities, everything.

School, college, and the grind of business he had met and conquered, and yet, in his thirty-second year, Rudolph Preston was unmarried. Women he had met, and in his own peculiar manner analyzed. None of them were for him.

"What is the use, mother?" he had answered, when she chided him for not choosing a companion, "a person can

not like *any one*. It is not right to pick and choose ; if it is to be, I shall meet her—it is a matter of Destiny.”

And so it was in this mood that he met with Mary Haswell.

“Rudolph,” his mother asked, one perfect June afternoon, “shall we drive to the orphan fair, at Kirkbridge? It is a very worthy object, and we shall meet the promoters of the school. My old friend Mrs. Haswell is a director, I understand.”

“Why, certainly, mother,” he answered, and they were soon at Kirkbridge, after a pleasant drive over country by-ways.

This is not a love story, although why shouldn't it be? Love moves the world—“rules the court, the camp, the grove.” Hatred plays no part in success.

Rudolph met Mary Haswell as she was occupied with a group of young girls from the orphan school at Kirkbridge.

At her father's death Mary had willingly assumed the management and care of the children from native compassion for them, born of her own great loss, which had awakened in her a keen sense of pity for the twenty or thirty homeless bairns, that called forth all the goodness of her head and heart toward their safe-keeping.

The young girl certainly formed a sweet picture as she appeared surrounded by her charges.

The afternoon was pleasantly spent, and the two found much in accord as they conversed, awakening for each other that respect which only sincerity of purpose can arouse. Which guide to success had shaped their lives thus far.

During the drive home that evening, Rudolph said little. He was thinking.

The renewal of friendship between the matrons paved the way for frequent meetings for the youth and the maid. A year's contact sowed the seeds of love in the soil of friendship, nurtured by respect. As true and courteous

their intercourse, sympathetic their friendship, binding their love.

Rudolph told his mother it was Destiny. The match was entirely in accord with Mrs. Preston's own ideas of such things.

With perfect understanding there was no need for prolonging the courtship, and the Christmas holidays were chosen to witness the union. The gayety of the season, the closing of Mary's loving work at the school, all tended to brighten the hopes of the many interested.

Hand in hand the lovers worked, with one thought, one purpose, the wish of the one the compact of the other. Rapid strides were made towards perfecting the future welfare of the orphan school, and autumn foliage turned to mark the time.

Was it Destiny?

Unexpected and unlooked for as it was, but with a week's ailment and no thought of a fatal termination, Mary Haswell was dead.

Touching indeed was the mourning at Kirkbridge and the school. Friends and relatives of the sweet girl spoke in reverence of her and her work.

The responsive chords she had attuned about her vibrated, though the frame was shattered.

And Rudolph?

He did not mourn for her; he missed her—that was the difference. She was all in all to him—his being. He could not get used to her absence.

She was not dead to him. She was somewhere, waiting. This he knew and felt. But where?

It was in April. Rudolph had passed the winter in hard work. Everything of importance with which he was connected had been closed and completed. His life work had ended with hers, and she was waiting for him. He thought this. It was one of the possibilities.

It was the evening of the fifth of April when Rudolph retired, bidding his mother good-night. The whole night was spent in prayer and passion. Prayer to the Almighty that he might be taken away. A sincere wish to meet her in the Unknown. Passion in the sense that he saw and lived again the days of old, held by the spirit of his Affinity,—Mary Haswell.

Rudolph Preston believed.

Toward morning he fell asleep and did not awaken until noon. After he had broken his fast he went to the quiet churchyard and spent an hour at her grave, wrapped in thought and prayer. He wreathed the mound and inscription with immortelles and evergreens.

Returning to the house, he repaired to his room and began a letter to his mother.

The April sun, setting in the tinted western clouds, cast its rays through the half-closed blinds.

The clock in the corner tolled the half hour of five—thirty minutes past the regular time for tea.

Stepping to the foot of the stair-case Mrs. Preston called softly for Rudolph, but received no answer.

Passing lightly up the long stairs his mother opened the door and looked into the room.

In the corner, by the old-fashioned secretary, faintly outlined in the darkened room, she saw a bowed form. She smiled as she thought of catching her boy asleep.

Crossing the room she placed her hand lightly upon his shoulder. The letter lay before him. He did not move. Looking into his face, she saw that he, also, was smiling, but,—

The spirit of Rudolph Preston lived in another world.

A STORY'S MISSION.

A STORY'S MISSION.

At the Writers' Club one evening in December, several years ago, a party of us sat talking and enjoying ourselves before the luxurious roaring log fire. In honor of the place and name each member felt himself bound to recur to those incidents that, under one condition or another, had led up to the climax of a sketch, paragraph, book or poem. You may rest assured that the reasons for the deductions arrived at were many and varied, and from plain facts and statements, in bare recitals and anecdotes ranged to the most unheard of complications and romances one could conceive.

Willard's turn arriving, we all settled ourselves to hear some startling phase of the aid to scribblers, as Willard was noted for his far-fetched similes and rapid-reaching ranges of thought. However, this evening we were agreeably surprised and touched when he concluded. He began:

WILLARD'S STORY.

We all know what it is to graduate from the blue pencil scoring of our youthful efforts, the pen-lashing efforts of learned critics and other little set-backs incident to journalism and story writing, but I never felt so heartily glad that I was a writer, hunting in every glance, expression, result and action for material for a sketch as I was when the following incident I shall tell to you came to my notice:

I was city editor in charge of a prosperous daily in a rapidly growing New Jersey town, and above the daily grind, attendant on the getting out of a morning paper, found time to indulge myself in study and training, that led up to the production of several short stories that took fairly well, being published in a couple of leading magazines, after much

dressings and toning to meet the ideas of those adapted to judge of the needs of their clients. I could all the more feel the force and necessity of this "calling," I might term it, as I was of necessity forced to put my daily "copy" through the same mill, and you may rest assured that, after my experience with the Metropolitan journals, I was all the more careful of my co-laborers, and in doing unto others that which I wished others to do unto me. In the course of my labors, I remember receiving, one afternoon, in the regular newspaper mail, a neatly written poem, entitled "The Prodigal Son."

It was written by a woman, and I read it over carefully. The lines and conception were not without merit, but I had a horror of poetry that was forced upon me to read. It seemed so out of place for a daily journal. I cannot yet appreciate the necessity for it, other than in some proper periodical; then all the thought, care and reason for its being in type should be carefully and particularly weighted, for the perpetuation of whatever worth it may possess. Coupled with my opinions was the fact that the author in this instance was unknown to me, either by name or in person, and, therefore, I was constrained to reject it.

This, however, I did considerately, tempering justice with mercy, and pointing out the faults as I found them, and writing the unknown one to try again. With a persistency born of genius, came two or three more efforts, all of which I noticed were pervaded with a morbid tendency. One poem, after a little correction, I used. It was entitled, "Alone at Twilight," and began :

"Alone at twilight at the woodlands edge,
Impressions deep and still enrich my soul."

As a whole it was good and no mistake. Perhaps my own mood had a good deal to do with my appreciation of the sentiment. At any rate, the article appeared in our Saturday edition and pleased myself, and its author—I have

no doubt. Besides, it filled up a niche. Other than that, no one ever mentioned it to me. It might have sunk deep into the heart, or been cherished by some not known to me, but I think the column relating to a local political wrangle outlasted and outlived it largely.

The poetess, after this signal notice of her efforts, then turned her powers into prose writings, sending several sketches touching on love, anecdote and other stories. In these productions, as in the verses sent, I found the morbid tenor still existing. Some of the sketches were very good in respect to their promptings and general treatment, and I, therefore, after some dressing, had them to appear from time to time. Then the pith and force began to fall away, and I had to reject one after another.

I think I had returned about seven or eight, when, one afternoon as I was about to leave the office, a timid young woman appeared on the threshold. Resuming my seat, I bade her enter. She asked for the editor, and then desired to learn the reasons for the return of her manuscript. From her outward appearance of necessity, and her worn expression, I was inclined to feel sympathy for her in her trying position. After listening awhile to what she had to say, I gave her the reasons for the rejection of her articles. While I explained she was very attentive and seemed willing to learn. Taking one of her latest productions, I made corrections, pointing out to her the reasons from a point of general composition and also to the needs regarding certain forms and styles. The article, as corrected, being upon a current subject, was used.

I did not try to form any opinion of the woman as she came to me, I only knew that I had toward her a feeling as though I should like to assist her, and she certainly took my advice generously.

I could see she had not done any professional writing although I judged in her early school days she had been

able to prepare a fairly meritorious essay or composition. I offered her my services in any way that she could see her way clear to accept and the offer subsequently she did accept and often came to me with manuscript that we went over together. At length her style so far improved that little, if any, corrections were made, and she began to write with more ease.

We were on pretty familiar terms from repeated visits on her part, and under exchange of opinions her reserve gave way and she became a very interesting conversationalist. Notwithstanding her outward appearance, she was a cultured woman, and her every manner betokened refinement and good birth. The majority of her articles, as they came to me, still contained that all-pervading sentiment, pathos, and depression that should have been foreign to a healthy mind. The woman's frame was wasted, I had noticed, but she showed no evidences of sickness or weakness.

One day she brought in a most doleful story of a couple of waifs and their untimely ending. Really, I thought, this is getting too much—can't I find some way to break her of it; open some other more cheerful avenue for her talents?

About a week later she came to me for one of her accustomed chats. She seemed to be just in a humor for sympathy, and, lending myself to it, I asked her if she had any objections to telling me the story of her life. She said she had not. In fact, would be glad for me to know, as she was thankful for my assistance and the comfort she received from my advice, for I had advised her in reference to some private matters that she did not feel competent to handle. From her story I learned that she was entirely alone, and thrown on her own resources, with everything against her. She deserved great credit for her perseverance in the paths she had selected, showing her good principles and indomitable will. Her story, briefly, was to the effect that when a young girl, her parents in the North having died, she was sent to rela-

tives in the far West. There she was educated and reared to the best of their ability.

Differences, however, arising between herself and her cousins, which later led to a bitter quarrel, she had left them, returning East.

She taught school for awhile, until the strain being too great for her, she collapsed and went through a long sickness that reduced her and left her almost destitute. It was when convalescing that she wrote the first poem that was sent to my paper. The kindness of friends, her temptations and various other items were related during the course of her story.

I brooded over what she had told me for several weeks, and finally my overwrought imaginations conceived an idea. At our next interview I asked her if she had any objections to my weaving the details of her life story into a sketch. Laughing, she acquiesced, saying that she should be much interested to see in what manner it would be treated. Keeping my own counsel, I commenced my work. It was nearing Christmas-tide. It should be a Christmas story, therefore. So I weaved about the pathetic story, with its struggles, its lessons, its outcomes, a thread of the forgivenesses and recollections of the most blessed season of the year. I gave an exact depiction of the story as given to me. And did it all the more real because it was real and I had a motive.

The lesson of the Prodigal Son was made to do service for the Wandering Daughter, the stray from the festivities of Yule-tide was given a place in the hearts of those who would fain have known her whereabouts—and then with a prayer, I sent on its mission “The Story of Esther.”

It was sent by design to a Western magazine devoted to home reading and fortunately for my purpose, was accepted. I had never let my friend see the manuscript. Indeed, I told her that my task was not finished.

I waited.

A week before the 25th of December, in my personal mail came a large package. Opening it, I found a copy of the magazine, containing my story, and a letter, asking if the foundation of the story were true, and if I could give any facts that would lead to the knowledge of the whereabouts of the subject of my sketch, and begging me if it were possible to acquaint the writer, etc. To say I was happy would be to put it mildly. Sending for my fair author, I first let her read the story as it was printed, and before she could say a word, I handed her the letter of inquiry, signed by her relative.

Upon finishing the latter, Mrs. R— broke down and wept for happiness.

My task was ended.

To close, the letter was answered, and one, I know, participated in the season's gayeties with a gladdened heart, for the breach, worse than death, was healed.

A MAN'S EXPERIENCE.

A MAN'S EXPERIENCE.

FAR back from the country towns, many miles from any railroad centre, and away from civilization's influence and smoothening touch, lay the farm of Jabez Ardwent. Jabez rightly called it the Homestead. It was his by inheritance ; was his father's before him, aye, was his grandfather's. The generations of Ardwents, reared and tutored in the art of husbandry, had left many descendants, as the names of the present land owners or tenants in the country around would testify.

Unremitting and laborious work from the first acquisition of the lands to the time of which we speak, had characterized the entire life-work of the Ardwents. The removal of forests primeval and reclaiming barren lands, gave little time for rest, recreation or improvement. These, therefore, formed no part of the family's existence.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter, each bringing its own work with an occasional period of enforced idleness, came and went, year in and year out.

Rotation in crops and work, with lack of both time and means for advancement, soon left the country folk far behind in the race for knowledge that dwellers in the large cities were making.

Plodding, contented, they lived and died, performing no great life-work, imbued with no high aspirations. Unaware, as far as outward evidences would show, of progress or a better state.

The slight insight gained of a better way of living, instead of broadening, simply narrowed and crowded them back into a hard way of living, with an end and aim at

money-getting, which robbed them of all ideas of fairness and honorable dealings. Not strictly dishonest, yet with a code of ethics stamped and pressed without the leavening of *noblesse oblige*. To meet a person of this latter genius meant simply a chance to take unscrupulous advantage of them at every turn.

And thus the country stood.

The boys grew up, married, took farms of their own, and the usual routine was pursued. That any other course should ever be thought of never entered the heads of the parents.

But, guard against it as you may; bury hopes and ambitions as you may, seeds of discontent will take root.

For, while Jabez Ardwent was feeding his stock and performing such daily duties in his slow methodical way, as winter farm work requires, little did he dream of the rebellious thoughts of his eldest son.

In the dining-room of the old homestead, where generations of men had sat and eaten their frugal fare without a thought of ever doing any other work than that of tilling the soil, stood Elisha Ardwent, with his hands deep in his pockets. He was only a lad, with a lad's ideas of work and responsibility. He had finished his chores and now stood gazing at the open, colorless winter sky and the leafless, swaying branches of the trees.

As Elisha lowered his eyes and saw the corn stubble and cabbage stalks rearing their scraggly tops from the clinging snow, he involuntarily shrugged his shoulders, thus showing the nature of his thoughts, turned on his heel, and slowly paced the floor. The spirit of the pioneer ancestors, dormant for many years, was again showing itself in the nature of Jabez Ardwent's son. He longed to know another sphere than the one in which he lived. Many successive communions thereafter had Elisha with his innermost self. Then came the spring months with all the necessary work of repairing and overhauling. Later came breaking the

ground and planting, and then the farmer's hard season began. Harvesting over, the summer planning of Elisha began to take shape.

On several occasions he had tried to express himself to his father, but somehow the words left him and his courage failed.

One evening however, while all were gathered in the long, low ceilinged dining room, the same room in which his thoughts of freedom came to him, Elisha broached the subject. The protecting presence of his mother may have given voice to his pent up thoughts. At any rate, he began by stating that he intended to leave the farm for the city. With this opening his ideas and hopes rushed out fearfully, exultingly, until he had said all he could in favor of his heart's wish.

While he had been talking not a word was spoken by the members of the family, who sat about the table. Occasionally his parents looked at him over the rims of their spectacles or the girls glanced over the tops of their books, but no word was spoken.

When Elisha ceased speaking the readers dropped their books and papers, the women their sewing and the boys their games.

In the dead silence that followed his outbreak, his mind received impressions that he remembered to his dying day.

As for his mother, she stopped rocking the old-fashioned chair, and raised her eyes to her son's. Although from his tone and manner she knew of his determination—that he would leave home—she showed no emotion—the Ardvents and Seetons were not given to tears. She simply set her lips and from her eyes shone the admiration she felt. She, too, had had visions and dreams and in the highest and wildest was woven the destiny of her boy.

His father said nothing for a long time. He sat with his head down and his hands on the arms of his chair. It was a blow to him to lose his son.

In accordance with the accepted idea—handed down from one generation to another—he looked forward to the time when Elisha should take the farm, and he should live in the homestead even as his father had before him. Jabez Ardwent took a thing at its worst import, and was a long time in turning it to its brightest side.

When Jabez was through thinking and in a measure swallowing his own hopes, he broke the distressing silence with mild expostulations.

To these his son gave argument, the two finally settling down to planning for the younger man's life in the great city. "If ye want to go, son, why, I'll do all I can ter help ye. An' if things are not as ye expect, why, come back agin."

With this homily and an accompanying sigh, the elder one arose and went out to see if all was well before retiring.

With the father's exit the buzz of inquiry was directed at Elisha, who, until his father ceased talking, had been staring hard at a figure in the well-worn carpet.

Relieved of the uncertainty of opposition, he was more at ease and spent the balance of the evening in explaining his future course. Questions and answers flew thick and fast, and there was more thinking done in the Ardwent household when the inmates retired than there had been for some time.

In a week Elisha's preparations for departure were completed, and ten days later he had cut loose from home ties and began his city life as clerk in the office of a manufacturing concern. Having a natural liking for mathematics, and being well schooled in the rudiments through his mother's efforts, he was fairly fitted for use and advancement in his chosen line.

And now Elisha Ardwent's life-work had commenced. His farm training had given him an insight into details and needs for carefulness, which now stood him in good stead. He was methodical, painstaking, attentive. As a conse-

quence, he was soon promoted to a more responsible position with his firm. He often thought of his old home and its life.

At first leaving his parents was a sore trial to him, but his work kept him busy and the holidays were upon him before he knew it. Going home was a treat to which he long looked forward. For Elisha's work brought with it trials and troubles that often caused him to long for his boyhood days and his mother's attention. When the time came, therefore, for his visitation he made suitable purchases for presents and left the city for his country vacation.

A long railroad journey and a drive of nearly twenty miles over familiar country roads and the old homestead was reached.

Infatuated as he was with his good fortune in commercial lines, Elisha was hardly reconciled to the looks of the old barns and buildings and the gabled house with its flat roof extension. Once inside the old house, however, his momentary feelings were dispelled by the glad welcome he received, and his vanity was flattered by the glances of admiration accorded him. No great changes had occurred. His parents seemed a little more anxious, a little more care-worn perhaps.

The boys had grown bigger and the girls had left the district school in order to master the household duties that were proving too heavy for the older ones.

The work appeared to go on about the same, there were no great improvements or advancement in any part of the community and contrast with the hustle and bustle of the city was always uppermost in Elisha's mind. His vacation, to be candid, proved irksome. He longed for the variety attendant upon the efforts to please the pleasure-loving and the monotony of the country palled upon him.

Elisha's time was not his own. Realizing this, he soon began to fret at his absence from the office and soon cut his

vacation short. In less than the two weeks allowed him, he was again at his desk. Here his duties multiplied, and, while he objected to the laborious work in the fields, he was working twice as hard and by a process almost so insensible, that he neither knew nor felt the strain upon him.

His next vacation was taken at a fashionable watering place, where he entered into the gayeties with the initiated. After this the farm had no attraction for Elisha.

And so ten years soon slipped away. His business experience made a remarkable change in Elisha Ardwent's character.

Contact with the leaders in manufacturing industries, the knowledge of ways and means and the thorough business schooling made him wonderfully acute in his dealings and his aims. His learning, valuable as it was, was luckily not gained at the expense of his morals. Instead of its having a narrowing, sordid effect, it had a broadening influence—such a contrast to the close-fisted policy born of dire necessity he had met with among the neighbors of his youth.

Politics, too, took up his spare time, and he often wondered at the work he found time to do by close application. Some fortunate investments enable him to make purchase of a valuable piece of real estate in the central portion of the city.

In the course of events Elisha led to the altar a city-bred young girl who promised "to love, honor and obey" and "to care for him in sickness and in health."

He took his bride to live in a fine brown-stone front in a fashionable portion of the city—quite a contrast to the old homestead.

Elisha Ardwent then settled down to enjoy a fortune acquired in congenial channels.

Later on, "Honorable," as he was called, became interested in a large manufacturing concern that bore his name. To

enter into this last venture he was compelled to draw heavily upon his own resources, and to raise a large sum through the endorsement of personal friends. It was before the last of these obligations were liquidated that the factory was forced to suspend work from lack of sufficient orders. A general depression in the various industries pervaded the country and there was no certainty when the outlook would prove brighter.

This suspension was fatal to Elisha, who was forced to make an assignment. To satisfy his creditors everything went—all the accumulations and business interests of years.

As if to test his endurance further, just as he was about getting his affairs straightened out, and while casting about for some means of mending his reverses, word came to him of the death of his father.

This news caused Elisha Ardwent to pause. In his career in his new home from the third or fourth year he had rarely visited the old folks, and, truth to tell, had let them and the farm pass almost wholly from his mind. In the height of his affluence, his wishes gratified, his parents alive, he had no need for them or the old homestead.

News of his father's death, coming as it did, seemed a finger-mark of Providence—a humiliation as well as a salvation. As if to further show him the necessity for this home turning, the wife followed the husband, and the children were parentless. It was a sad reunion at the farm when the parents were laid to rest in the country churchyard, where the winds of winter and the breezes of summer whistled and played through the evergreens and pines.

The will of Jabez Ardwent left the farm of his ancestors, in line to his eldest son. The girls had all married, the boys had places of their own.

The will as made was a matter of family pride with Jabez, he never imagined and never knew of his son's downfall.

When Elisha knew that the farm was his a ray of hope came to him and his heart became lighter. He looked from the same window through which he stared when he had resolved to be of the unknown world. His surroundings then looked distasteful and black to him; now a halo of light seemed to surround the place. He welcomed it as a haven—a refuge. He saw the outbuildings in a much worse condition than when he went away.

Not a dollar had he contributed to better the looks of the place. The little labor he had put in it had been obliterated long ago. And now it was his!

The generations of Ardwent had toiled and fought with nature; they died, and some had been forgotten, but they had lived their lives according to God's Holy Law and not a taint clouded their dealings as among themselves or their fellow-men.

It took several weeks to close up affairs and then Elisha returned to the city with his mind full of expectation for the future.

To live amid the scenes of his former successes would be hard. He would return to the home from whence he came.

That evening, after returning to his boarding house, for his mansion had been sold—he laid his plans in detail before his wife. Proud as he knew her to be, he resolutely went to her for her co-operation. Had he the least suspicion of her refusal to follow his fortunes—good or bad—Elisha Ardwent was taught a lesson in woman's love that would have been humiliating.

True, staunch and courageous, in her husband's hour of need, Grace Ardwent loomed up a noble woman. Without a word or a sigh of regret she entered into his plans and furthered their progress with all her energy.

As soon as his personal affairs could be arranged, with their two children they left the city, the dream of Elisha's boyhood, and returned to the old homestead.

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FRONTIER SERVICE IN '49.

FRONTIER SERVICE IN '49.

IT WAS at one of those charming occasions, a canoeists' "smoker," that I heard the following narrative. I think it worthy of perpetuation, if only as a comparison of hardships.

The smoke hung low in the spacious club quarters as Heulton was called upon for a yarn. The flowing bowl was responsible for many tales, before untold, and the visitor, being called upon, relieved himself of a long whiff of cigar smoke, and, stretching at ease, began:

"I was thinking, after what I have gone through in my little canoe, that I must have been born to be hanged. I have enough poison in my system to kill a thousand men if I were to be fed to so many; passed safely through a skirmish fight that laid low at my side seventy of my comrades; have been shot in the legs with Apache poisoned arrows; outlived five men fighting in a corral with the red devils howling around; have gone three days without water, and have eaten ten days' rations of bacon at once to keep it from melting away—saving what hard-tack I had as more precious than gold. After my several such experiences I feel free to say that I am safe from the evils of fire and flood.

"What I shall tell you is an incident that happened during the time I was connected with the government surveying party through Arizona, and deals with a common phase of life in the southwest at that time. You must recollect that in 1849 the country west of the Mississippi was still in the hands of the various Indian tribes, and, while the gold excitement on the Pacific coast was causing a rapid settlement in California, no protection for emigrants

existed. It was not until the government established lines of forts and organized companies of cavalry that the intermediate territory was safe for the white man to travel."

Here came a pause for reflection, during which several suspicious gurgles were heard, but out of politeness not located. One brother was observed to fold about him, Indian-fashion, a red blanket; another hunted up a Winchester and a butcher's knife, while the "Kid" spread his blanket near the light of the fire that crackled in the open fire-place.

Personally, I noticed that Heulton had an intensely brown eye, that I had often thought never slept. It was restless and alert, yet in reflection it was as kindly and tender as a gentlewoman's. The lines in the face and forehead, and the square, firm chin, showed the resolution of a brave man. The muscles of his throat, chest and arms would have excited the admiration of an athlete. A slight limp, while walking, was caused by a wound in the right knee. On a trip he was the soul of good humor, would put up with any inconvenience, and was always ready to help one in misfortune. He was a picture in a canoe, and at his best when fighting a heavy rift, or in a bad corner.

But Heulton resumed:

"I think I can interest you for a few moments by recounting my last adventure in the west before returning to civilization. I was twenty-six years old at the time I joined the party that left Fort M—— to establish a post further east, and had been seven years' scouting beyond the Platte. I had thus served out my "tenderfoot" apprenticeship.

"We were to work from the west, and had explored and surveyed in Arizona—the meanest place on the continent in which to exist, at that time, as it was full of fighting, treacherous natives, and was intensely dry, hot and dusty. We were starved half the time—as we could only get rations once in eight months—and thirsty all of the time.

“As for life, it was worse than a hazard of dice. When on the march, if a man dropped behind the line for any reason he never rejoined the party; an Indian arrow killed him, and an Indian scalped him.

“Since returning east, I have often stopped to think that what a man can go through he never knows until he is tested. You might use all the expletives you want to and nothing could describe it but the phrase ‘a hard life.’

“As I said before, the sun melted and dried up everything susceptible to its influence. Life was neither thought of, nor counted as of any worth. This was true of both Indians and whites, and I think the men who came out safely were those who did not value their own lives. The careful and cautious ones were usually the first to get killed or wounded.

“As an instance of the worthlessness of life, you have no idea of the deaths that resulted from disputes at cards. It was a regular thing for the bull-whackers, when through for the day, to start ‘poker’ and ‘seven-up,’ their games lasting with the night. I never cared much for the games, but would play if invited to, though never after twelve o’clock at night. When that time came I took my blanket, hunted up a little hollow or hump behind which to lay, and went to sleep.

“During the night you would be awakened by a fusilade, and then all would be quiet. Next day, on counting noses, someone would be missing. You were supposed to know enough not to ask questions, but somewhere about camp would be a mound of sod higher than the plain, which told the story. Should you be thoughtless enough to ask the whereabouts of Jones or Smith, your informant would say ‘The fool got into a muss last night; it was his own fault.’ With whom, you would never find out, and with the little information given the matter would be dropped.

“After an unusually tiresome scout we returned to Fort

M——, and learned that an Indian uprising was imminent. The Apaches were always fighting and harassing emigrant trains and troops, but only at uncertain periods did they burn and pillage the settlers, or attack frontier forts.

“ We had been resting about two days—if you can call it resting to sleep with a carbine under you and a brace of pistols on your person—when we got word that a party of young bucks were closing in on Fort Y——, some forty miles away. Of course, it was the duty of the commandant to protect any one in danger, but in such a case as this it was customary to call for volunteers, for, in answering these calls, a man took his life into his own hands, and it would be next to murder to order men out. The party of volunteers thus organized received an escort of regular troops, furnished by the commandant.

“ For myself, I was used to scouting, and had done enough of such work to know quite well the Indian mode of warfare, of attack and defense, with their stratagems, and had answered many a call for volunteers. Mrs. C., the captain’s dashing and daring little wife, who could shoot, ride and fight, as well as her husband, used to inquire, on such occasions, ‘ Is Jack going? Oh, how good! If they obey him they will come through all right.’

“ Whatever might have been thought, I never had any trouble to get volunteers, and on this occasion I offered to warn the fort if I could pick my five men and be under no orders to come or go. This was agreed to readily, and by two o’clock I had my men fully equipped and ready.

“ Captain C—— was anxious to have us start immediately. But I was opposed to this, as I counted on traveling at night. My reason for this was that the Apaches were averse to fighting at night, preferring to wage their warfare in the day-time, when their deadly poisoned arrows could be shot into a party, around which they would circle at a distance. In this way they took the life of many a brave

man, whom it was impossible to avenge, as a rally would send them scattering to the hills, with which they were perfectly familiar, and only result in wholesale disaster to their pursuers.

“Knowing this, then, I laid my plans for starting about five o'clock; this would give us the protection from the fort until dark, after which we would have to look out for ourselves. At daylight, next morning, I calculated upon being near enough to Y—— to get aid from there if necessary.

“My plans succeeded, for we got through all right, although we knew that we were surrounded by silent foes all along the trail. During our ride we also saw numerous signal fires from the peaks about us.

“When we entered the fort, I found Apache Indians inside, at their old game of playing friendship, awaiting signals to turn and murder and pillage when expected reinforcements arrived. I directed the commandant to clear the fort, and to barricade it, before I delivered my despatches. The scowling visages of the red villains, when they saw their plans thwarted, were anything but pleasant to see. They didn't make any resistance, although my boys were itching for a 'go' at them.

“I then served orders and gave the necessary instructions. In turn, the commandant, having despatches and news from San Francisco, was very anxious for us to return immediately with them to Captain C——. This I did not want to do until nightfall, as it was a moral certainty that our trail would be covered as soon as our discovery of the Indian plot was made known to the reinforcing party.

“The 'old man,' however, did not see it that way. 'To him, time saved was time gained, and he was very persistent in importuning us to return. For myself, I was out under scouting license, and would have accepted orders from no one, but my men were half willing to make an early start, as the following day was pay-day, and unless they

were paid off then they would have to wait six or eight months before the paymaster came around again, as they had to be there in person to sign vouchers. 'Pay-days' you must know were very anxiously awaited and were important days at the post. Sometimes it took all of a man's back pay to settle his liquor and tobacco bills, together with sundry 'debts of honor.'

"I told them, and the commandant, too, that they would never get in alive. It was only a matter of experience and caution with me,—I might also say pride,—as I had a pretty clean record for bringing my command back in good shape, and I did not care to risk life any more than was absolutely necessary. Under pressure, I gave way, and passed the word to get ready, and at two o'clock we started.

"I should never have yielded against first impressions, as my feelings were prophetic of coming disaster. I asked the captain to clear the trail after we were out of sight, as it led through a narrow canon, which I intended to avoid.

"It was a terribly hot afternoon, and as we filed on about a hundred yards apart, both men and horses became played out, so we were compelled to proceed slowly.

"As I was in the lead when we struck the gorge or canon, instead of turning in I started up from the plain to the top of the plateau, knowing that we could get a clear sweep of the country, and thus be doubly secure.

"I had covered a good bit of ground, when the boys came up and began to grumble against the route. Of course it was longer, about nine miles out of our way, and they did not like the idea of going so far in the hot sun.

"I told them that the longest way around would be the shortest way home, and the safest. Besides, they could plainly see Indian signs about the canon—the fresh *mescal* cuds, convincing me that the place was alive with them.

These cuds were never-failing signs, as the Indians chew the leaves when on long raids, for the purpose of exciting moisture.

"My men were all brave fellows, and felt equal to the task of wiping any number of Indians from the face of the earth, and they could fight, for I had seen them at it. Against my wishes and better judgment, I agreed, since they were so set against the longer trip.

"As they turned down the cliffside, I dismounted to adjust my saddle girth and to see to my weapons, as I was sure that the latter would be useful before we got through. It was some distance to the entrance to the gorge, and before I got very far advanced in the narrow defile the last man had disappeared.

"I was just about rounding a bend of rocks, when I heard a sharp fusilade and the demon cries of the dreaded Apaches. Then, for a moment, not a sound was heard. I knew instinctively that not one of my men was alive, for had there been any one to fight, the report of a rifle or pistol would have broken the stillness.

"The red-skins thought they had the whole party, and, not looking any further, were busying themselves in scalping their victims. To save myself was the question. I left 'Buckskin,' my faithful broncho, to himself, and he did not betray the trust imposed. He could not turn where we were, and had to back cautiously for quite a distance, before he could find the necessary room. Besides, the path was full of loose stones that made a very insecure footing.

"Once turned about, I put my horse on a run for the fort. 'Buckskin,' however, here spoiled my plans, and nearly caused me to fall into the hands of the savages by letting out a resounding neigh. Instantly I had a horde of the rascals at my heels. Into my horse went the spurs and we got out as quickly as possible, but not fast enough.

to avoid arrows, which I got in the legs, together with a bullet in the knee. My poor horse looked like a porcupine.

“Had I found that I could not make camp, I had a pistol ready to send a bullet into my brain, for I should never have been taken alive,—I knew too well what it meant.

“As luck would have it, a party from the fort had been detailed to clear the trail, and I ran into them, falling off my horse at the head of their advancing column. The troops, of course, were suspicious, thinking it might be a ruse, and so surrounded me. When they learned who I was, I was taken back.

“Upon seeing the captain, I insisted that a guard be furnished to take me to Fort M——. and blamed him, in strong terms, for the death of the men. The surgeon in charge wanted me to stay where I was, as I was weak from loss of blood. But I would not, so a detachment was made up and we started. I was placed in a heavy prairie wagon, and, as it had no springs, suffered excruciating pains during the trip, which lasted until ten o'clock the next day.

“On our way through the trail we found and buried my five men and the only Indian killed in the ambush. The savage had been shot by the leader as he rushed forward; we found him, lying as he fell, face downward, with nothing on but a breech-cloth. My men were all scalped, and their horses were killed also. We were assailed twice on our return journey by the red wasps, and lost two men.

“When I reached my own camp I had the best possible attention, but was entirely helpless, not being able to use hands or feet. By good fortune not one of the poisoned darts had entered my body; which gave me a fighting chance. The surgeon, with whom I was on the best terms,

told me that he would do his best for me, but gave me little encouragement.

“My whole mind, from this on, was bent upon getting east. From preparations that were going on, some weeks later, I learned that a party was being made up to go to San Diego for supplies, and to take those of our wounded that could be moved.

“I begged Captain C—— to let me go with them. The surgeon said it was ridiculous—that I would die before I got out of sight, could not stand it, and all that. But I was determined to go, just the same, and asked the driver of the stage if he had any objection to my being fastened to the seat with him. Mind you, I was entirely helpless, from the effects of my wounds and the poison, and could not even feed myself. The driver, a big, good-natured western plainsman, agreed, if I was so set on going, to look after me. That settled it, and as his word was law in his own sphere, I started with them. I believe I felt better from that moment.

“Of all the trips for me that was one of the worst. We kept up a constant skirmish with the Indians; were swept down swollen streams; waited a week for a safe ford over one, and to cap the climax, my stage went over the side of a cliff, rolling over and over.

“Our mishap was serious, yet laughable. Everyone managed to get out but the driver and myself. I was strapped in and could not, and we went down together. When we stopped, he got out to disentangle things and the rest hunted us up. They found me alive and able to take my share of the whiskey they handed around, and would hardly believe their eyes. While I could not help myself I had good use of my tongue, and did my best not to be a burden. I had made up my mind to get to the coast at any rate and so far my will stood me in good stead.

“Finally we got to San Diego, and took ship to San

Francisco. As if to threaten me further, the first night out the ship took fire. It burst out between the decking and partition of my stateroom, and I noticed it on account of the heat.

"I could not move, but called to one of the men, who came to me. He wanted to raise an alarm at once. I begged him not to do so, for there were sixty souls on board and I knew a panic would be worse than a fire. I entreated him to go quietly to the captain and acquaint him with the state of affairs. He did.

"The captain hurried to the scene and began preparations for controlling the flames, and headed the vessel for the beach. But the mate, a cool-headed and plucky fellow, with the aid of some seamen, succeeded in putting the fire out, so we continued on our course.

"Arriving in San Francisco, I was placed in the Sisters' hospital. Having gold and money enough to last me for some time, two of the party staid with me.

"You can tell how sick and weak I had become, for from a hundred and eighty-seven pounds I went to ninety-eight, and was suffering terribly with the wound in my leg, which, from want of proper care, was eating away the flesh and bone at the knee.

"The time arrived for the vessel—one of the Vanderbilt coast-line clippers—to sail for the Isthmas. I was taken aboard. Here my two nurses told me they intended to desert the army, as they were tired of the life they led on the frontier. Of course I could not countenance this, and so they left me.

"Being alone, I sent ashore for someone, a New Yorker preferably, to keep me company until the ship sailed. A Jew, from Chatham street, was hunted up. He came to me and treated me elegantly. Through him, a prominent surgeon came to see me, and promised a cure if I would have my leg cut off at the knee. This I refused to do, but

at his solicitation I left the vessel and was taken to the best hospital in the state. Here, after twenty-two months of the kindest sympathy and attention, I was discharged as cured.

“As I was a States subject, I had all the money refunded that I had paid out, and in addition was granted a pension.

“From the time I left the hospital I used a cane in walking for quite a while,—until I was married,—and might be yet, but for forgetting to take it along one day, while I was on my bridal tour, in Washington.

“One morning, my wife and I left the hotel together for a walk, and we had gone quite a distance before she observed that I was without my walking-stick and called my attention to it.

“‘Well, Anna,’ said I, ‘if I can walk this far without it I guess it must be imagination or habit. I won’t go after it,’ and I did not.”

BAFFLING A CONSPIRACY.

BAFFLING A CONSPIRACY.

NEARLY ten years have now elapsed since the event that I am about to narrate took place. That I am alive to-day I attribute to the fact of incidental good fortune that enabled me to baffle a conspiracy, the successful culmination of which, had I appeared upon the scene a trifle earlier, would have decreed me death.

Entering upon a business career after serving my apprenticeship I connected myself with a large jewelry firm in the city of New York. I had been advanced from one position to another until, being adjudged competent, I was given an extensive territory, containing concerns and individuals from whom I was expected to procure a large business.

You may be sure that I worked hard to further my own interests by turning in the largest orders possible. I had worked up my territory and made extensive additions until I felt that I was entitled to a needed rest before again pushing for a larger increase.

As I was beginning to feel settled, however, I received a letter from my employers requesting me to report to the home office as soon as I could arrange to leave the work then in hand.

Wondering at the hasty summons I straightened out my affairs to the best advantage, leaving in my place a trustworthy under-clerk. Upon reaching New York I went at once to the head office, where I was greeted by the senior member of the firm, who kindly complimented me on my progress, and also on my promptness in answering their summons.

Sending for the junior partner and the head bookkeeper,

we repaired to the private office and were closeted for nearly half a day in discussing and hunting up data for the purpose of enforcing the settlement of a claim that had about it an air of mystery.

It seemed that among the numerous customers of the firm was a concern, trading under the name of R. B. Dingley & Company, having their office or factory in a borough among the mountains of Western Pennsylvania.

The company dealt with us under a peculiar system, and, while the method of keeping their accounts was out of the usual order, still it was not intricate to one entering upon it at the beginning of the transaction.

R. B. Dingley & Company were known to us as the patentees of a certain instrument for scientific purposes, in the manufacture of parts of which they were compelled to use diamonds, as no other substance known at that time appeared to possess the requisite hardness.

The size of the diamonds varied, and ranged from a mere chipping to a three or four-karat stone, or, to be more explicit, from 45.257 mils to 289.300 mils in diameter.

As the use of these stones would require a large outlay of money, we had devised a plan whereby they agreed to deposit with us a stated sum covering the value of a certain number of gems. These we were to forward them, charging against the sum deposited.

Upon returning to us the first consignment we were to deduct the amount of our charges and to fill the accompanying order at a price not exceeding, including charges, one and one-half times the value of the preceding shipment.

The reasons for this can easily be seen, as it protected us and repaid the firm for the wear and tear of the gems.

We had transacted business upon this basis with them for some time, they claiming that the sale of the instruments compelled them to work on this basis until such time as they could thoroughly introduce them.

None of the principals of R. B. Dingley & Company were known to my firm personally, but their deposits were evidence of good faith, and they were quoted in a reliable mercantile agency.

Our method of delivery was through the express company to the station nearest their borough in Pennsylvania, the Dingley company's messenger receipting for the goods there, and conveying them over the mountains to the factory.

Affairs went on comparatively straight until they requested that we make them a shipment of large sizes, the last consignment needed for them to complete a series of drillings or drawings.

Inasmuch as the value of the order far exceeded the deposit, our firm was loath to make the shipment. However, upon considering the amount of trade and previous prompt payments, they decided to take the risk.

After making the shipment, for which they received in due form the express company's receipt of delivery, they heard nothing from the consignment.

The correspondence that ensued finally produced a statement from the Dingley company to the effect that the last consignment of diamonds was unsatisfactory, and also that they desired a complete statement of account for the three years' charges and commissions.

They claimed that our statements of transfers, exchanges and balances did not agree with their own, and desired to defer payment until the matter was adjusted.

The desire for delay was too apparent to such men of business as had charge of the affairs of our firm. The receipts which had been forwarded with each shipment, and which had been accepted without quivocation, were as complete statements of accounts as could be made.

It was therefore decided that I was to proceed to the works of Dingley & Company, and to demand payments due, and to recover the gems without compromise.

To enforce the wishes of my firm I carried the necessary power of attorney to enable me to act in all matters that might arise. I was also furnished with a complete statement of their account, which, although intricate from its extension over such a long period, I felt sure I understood.

In order to interrupt my own branch of the business as little as possible I suffered no delay, but immediately took the train for Pristine Junction, at which point I would be compelled to obtain a conveyance to take me over the mountains.

On the train I met an acquaintance, who was on his way to a town half way between New York and the Junction. He said, during our conversation, if I would go with him while he transacted a little business, he would go on with me to see the country.

Harry,—for that was his name,—was an ardent sportsman, and the country through which we would pass was noted for its abundance of small game.

For the sake of his companionship, I acquiesced, and, while the delay was not long, we did not reach the end of our railway journey until about three o'clock Friday afternoon, a day having been consumed in making the trip.

We had some trouble to get a carriage to take us over the mountains, as the driver said he would be late in getting there, and would have to stay all night. We soon arranged the fee to overcome his objections, and started.

In the course of our conversation, which of course was overheard by our "Jehu," we mentioned our destination. He shook his head and began asking me questions about the company. I told him I knew nothing about them, and in turn quizzed him.

I found that he knew nothing definite about them, but had heard numerous gossipy reports concerning their queer and seclusive ways.

This did not strike me seriously, as I knew that persons pursuing an object in a scientific line were liable to surround themselves with an air of mystery, which would attract marked attention in a country town. But when he hinted that one of the firm had left very suddenly, I made a mental note of it.

We reached the R. B. Dingley company's works just before six o'clock, and the shadows were beginning to lengthen.

We dismissed the driver, who, his artifice for an extra fee having succeeded, determined to return before morning. This was immaterial to us as we had expected to get a stage in the borough to take us back to the station.

We were compelled to go a considerable distance back from the public road to reach the works, which we had seen from a distance.

The entire structure had a massive appearance, and the building appeared to be a dwelling and factory combined. As we walked up to the entrance my friend remarked on the somber surroundings, and I joined in with him, for to my eyes it had all the appearance of a castle in the feudal times of England.

To the left of the front entrance was a room that appeared to be the office. We opened the door and entered.

Before us were two small rooms, we being in the outer one. In the room in which we found ourselves, on a low stool, sat a man engaged in adjusting some delicate mechanical parts of a small instrument.

Near the door leading into the smaller room was a block or box covered with a matting of curious design and fibre. This was all there was in the room, except a telephone on the end wall.

Looking through the door we saw a similar instrument hung in the back room and having a desk and writing pad near it.

As we waited, the workman finished his task and looked up at us. I asked him if this was the office of Messrs. Dingley & Company, and he nodded in assent.

I thereupon stated my connections and requested to see some member of the firm. Before I had ceased speaking, he abruptly turned on his heel, and, opening a door near the telephone in the first room disappeared from view. Harry commented on the treatment we were receiving, and I myself was a trifle provoked.

It was fast growing dark. Not a light was visible, neither could a sound be heard.

Going into the inner room, we saw before us a flight of stairs leading to the second floor. There was a landing at the top of the stairs, and a door ahead and one to the left, for we could see the white knobs in the faint light.

Thinking that the "odd mechanic," as Harry had dubbed him, had gone to notify someone of our presence, we waited until so long that, getting tired, we debated whether to go back into the town and return the next morning, or to stick it out until someone should come.

We had about decided on the former course, when Harry said he was going to see if there was anything on the floor above. I remonstrated with him to no purpose. He said if people would not be civil he would investigate their premises.

He therefore bounded up the stairs and I heard him trying the door at the head of the stairs. I followed him, and knew that he opened the door, for I felt the rush of air down the casement and saw light through the crack of a door beyond. Then the door flew shut with a bang, and I was left alone in the darkness.

Calling, I received no answer. Becoming alarmed, I sprang forward and turned the knob. It was in vain; the door was locked.

Feeling about, I touched the knob to the left and opened

the door. I found myself on the threshold of a large dining-room, brilliantly lighted and well furnished. To the rear of the building doors opened, showing rooms beyond.

With the light from the room flooding the hallway, I tried to open the first door, through which my friend had so unceremoniously disappeared. Finding I could not, I called again, but received no answer.

Thoroughly alarmed, and suspecting trouble, I re-entered the dining room and began surveying the walls and doors, in the hope of finding a way into the room corresponding to that portion of the house forming the right wing or tower, as I recollected it from the exterior.

But I found none, and going again to the landing I was about to descend with the intention of going to the town for assistance, when I heard steps outside and saw an envelope drop to the floor from a slit in the office door.

I hurried down the stairs, shouting out, but was not heard. Then I tried to open the door, but found it locked.

Indeed, had we but known it, the door was locked from the outside immediately after the workman had announced our presence to those in the house.

I turned to the windows. To my surprise I met with *deal shutters, fastened by a bar on the outside!* The shutters had evidently been put up while we were up stairs.

I was dumfounded, and worried. Something serious was up, and yet I could not fathom the reason.

My friend and I were undoubtedly imprisoned, but for what reason? Certainly not on account of the differences of my firm and this concern, of whom I had come to demand satisfaction.

The amount that they owed was large, but why this attempt at detention? Was it for the purpose of defeating attempts at collection? Had they been defrauding other concerns in the same manner?

I puzzled and studied vigorously, but could come to no satisfactory understanding.

Making sure that I could not get out, I picked up the telegram that had been dropped on the floor and returned to the dining-room.

On getting up stairs I found the envelope I held was only partially sealed—indeed, it came open in my hand. The envelope was addressed to “Charles Disstow, P——, Pennsylvania.” Glancing at the contents I found it a telegraphic copy of a cablegram, dated at Liverpool, England, and by code, “United States flags. Yesterday. Red Jacket.” The signature as written out was “Thomas Westmoreland.”

I had barely returned the telegram to the envelope when a gray-haired gentleman entered the room. I could see by his manner that my presence was well known to him.

Upon his entering, I arose and met his gaze. I had divined that the person before me was Dingley and so asked him. Upon his assenting I indignantly inquired the reason for the treatment inflicted upon my friend and myself. I demanded our release and the settlement of my firm's account. I very forcibly told him he would find the arm of the law a long one, even though he fancied himself beyond the pale of its influence in his chosen seclusion.

Dingley did not deign to answer my questions nor to heed my threats. I was quick to see that he was not alone in the case. Indeed, his cool assumption and the entrapping of my friend proved that. But what his resources or plans were, of course I knew not. I resolved to repeat my demands, and if he showed no disposition to accede to them, to assault him, make me escape and return with help.

The whole affair to me, was, to say the least, of the most mysterious kind, if it did not mean actual danger to us. Dingley's refusal to engage in conversation showed me that he was waiting for something.

As I was about to begin, a young girl, of about the age of sixteen, entered the room and busied herself in getting tea. She did not appear disturbed by my presence, merely glancing at me curiously.

Dingley, who was attired in a neatly-fitting frock-coat, light trousers, and in slippers, seated himself in a chair close by me and commenced asking me some questions concerning my errand.

I fully stated my case, and again upbraided him for his trickery. I also repeated my request for the release of Harry. For, although I was as much a prisoner as he, I thought if we could be together it would be to our advantage.

As far as my business was concerned Dingley vouchsafed no reply; as for my friend he assured me that he would be well cared for.

Before I could again speak a man and woman entered the room from one of the side doors. They were talking in reference to some evidently important subject, and in answer to a question the man answered, "that's as easy to fix as some other transfers."

At this the young girl put her fingers to her lips, and the new-comers, looking at me in surprise, seemed confused. Dingley and the man and woman then held a consultation, and presently all withdrew from the room but Dingley.

The latter then came to me and requested that I follow him. Instead I demanded an explanation of his conduct, and again demanded to be released. Still retaining his composure, he said that if I would do as he said all would be well. He desired to have a talk in reference to our account.

He lead the way through a door opening into the turret, a large compartment, well appointed and used as a sleeping room. He was somewhat in advance of me, and, turning an angle formed by a closet projecting into the room, I

thought I heard the "click" of a lock. I quickened my step and reached the door. As I put my hand on the knob the door through which we had entered closed with a similar "click," and I was a prisoner!

Dingley had locked the first door, stolen back into the room and locked the other one.

It came to me that my imprisonment was to be a matter of detention only.

Why?

Study as I might, I could not answer the question.

The room, now that the door was closed, was pitch dark,—no lamp or other means of obtaining light being at hand.

Making my way to the bed, I threw myself upon it, and thought. I could easily see that our arrival upon the scene had upset the plans of the "company," and that there was something more at the bottom of it all than the claim of my own firm.

While thus engaged I heard persons moving in the next room and surmised by the rattling of plates and cutlery that they were at tea. The sound of voices also came to my ears, but too faintly to be distinguished. After a while, all sounds ceasing, I fell asleep.

When I awoke the next morning light was streaming through the barred windows, and a meal was again in progress in the next room. As I had nothing else to do, I surveyed thoroughly the room and its contents. I was looking for some means of escape, if such means presented itself. This, as yet, seemed impossible, as I could not find the means for getting out of the windows, barred as they were.

In the course of my inspection I found on one of the tables a paper, yellowed by age and dated some three years back. This was about the time we began trading with the Dingley company. Opening the paper, therefore, I began

to read, and, in the column of foreign news, I came across an item giving the circumstances of the death of Richard Disstow, at Liverpool. The name and town immediately recalled to mind the episode of the telegram the night before, and I instinctively felt for it. I found the envelope in my pocket, whither I had thrust it upon the entry of Dingley into the dining-room.

Returning to the newspaper article, I found that Richard Disstow had left his only surviving relative, his brother Charles, a fortune of £150,000. The article concluded by saying that Charles Disstow, who was of a scientific turn of mind and well educated, was engaged in the production of an important patent somewhere in America, and that Sir Thomas Westmoreland, Bart., was the executor of the estate.

Following up the train of events thus placed before me, I concluded that Charles Disstow was the "company" of R. B. Dingley & Company, and was the inventor of the scientific apparatus manufactured, and that he was the brother of Richard Disstow, and heir to the vast fortune mentioned in the paper.

I then asked myself, was the second man I had seen the night before Charles Disstow? If so, and he was the possessor of such an amount of money, why should he seek to defraud my employers out of the balance due on the last consignment of diamonds, and what was his object in retaining Harry and myself in captivity.

I instinctively disliked Dingley from the moment I set eyes upon him. Of course the events of the previous night only accentuated such feelings. I also wondered to what extent he was interested in the firm.

Thinking that the second man might be the Charles Disstow mentioned, and that the telegram might have reference to money matters, I concluded that, no matter what their treatment, I had no right to retain it in my pos-

session. With this in my mind, I pounded on the door, hoping to call some one into the room. I braced myself against the door with the expectation of pushing into the outer room should the door be opened.

But I was disappointed. No one came.

Wearying of this, I resolved to explore back of the bedstead, as I had noticed a casement or lintel, almost even with the top of the head-board, and surmised that there was a door back of it. Pushing the bed away, I found I was right, but was additionally surprised to find it unlocked.

The room I entered was an unused bed-room. With bated breath I tried the door on the opposite wall. It was locked. The windows also were barred, the same as those in the turret. Going back to the room I had just left I replaced the bed as I had found it, and returned to the paper.

When I first took up the paper an oblong box lay upon it. This I had removed and placed on the end of the table. In reaching across I accidentally knocked it from the table. As it fell upon the floor, the lid flew open, scattering a number of papers and letters over the carpet. While replacing them I found they were letters addressed to Charles Disstow.

I had no scruples about opening them. I was there to learn all about this very person and his connections with the firm of R. B. Dingley & Company, and if I could utilize my time in confinement toward that end, I meant to do it.

I found that the letters all related to the fortune of Richard Disstow, and consisted of correspondence between the executor and the heir. Replacing them as I found them, I proceeded to put away the other papers also. While doing this I came across a folded card, marked "code." Opening it, a slip of paper dropped out and fluttered to the floor.

Regaining it, I read: "Charles Disstow, of P——, this state, was confined here to-day by R. B. Dingley. The application, stating that he is mildly insane, is signed by Dr. Kingsbury, who advises slight restraint, upon the request of Mr. and Mrs. Dingley." There was no date, and I could not conjecture how long ago the confinement had been made.

The slip had evidently been torn from some asylum record, and, judging by the color, I should have said it was about the same age as the paper. Still, I might be mistaken. Shut up from light and dust it might have been much older.

The correspondence, though, I noted, was dated up to within a month. Indeed the last letter spoke of the consummation of the labors of the executor, and the expectation of shortly turning over to the heir the whole inheritance.

The train of thought that this last letter forced upon me, received strength as I took up the "code," with the intention of deciphering the message. The card was well worn, as though frequently consulted, and the arrangement of words was simple. Placing the message on my knee, I inserted the equivalent from the "code" as I found it. Completing my task, I had good grounds for deciding not to return the telegram, and also to escape and secure the arrest of the inmates of the factory.

The telegram, filled in from the key, read as follows:

"LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND, ——"

"CHARLES DISSTOW, P——, PA. :

"Have cabled deposit in your name for £150,000, less fees and expenses, £1,000. Will write.

"THOMAS WESTMORELAND."

The cipher despatch was dated the day I arrived. The correspondence was directed to Charles Disstow hardly a month previous. Charles Disstow was incarcerated in a

private asylum, and had been placed there at least eighteen months before.

From the tenor of the correspondence of Mr. Westmoreland I could plainly see he was under the impression that he was dealing directly with the heir, when, in fact, he had not been for the last eighteen months. How much longer I did not know.

It was evident that Dingley, who had been planning to get the legacy, put himself in the place of Charles Disstow.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when the door was opened, and Dingley appeared, followed by a burly servant bearing a tray with my meal.

Knowing all I did, Dingley appeared doubly sinister to me. He still retained the same demeanor that I had noticed the day before, but it appeared to me that he was uneasy about something and had rather a dogged air than one of composure.

I asked when we would be released. He answered that he would go back with us to New York in a day or two, but at present it was necessary to keep us there. Further than that he would make no reply.

As he turned to leave the room he noticed the paper and box on the table, and immediately removed them, taking them out with him. Although evidently impatient that they had been in the same room with me, he went out without saying anything.

Upon finishing my search I had been careful to replace things as I had found them, and hoped their disturbance would not be noticed. But I counted too soon on getting off easy. In about half an hour he returned and asked me bluntly if I had read the letters.

Now, while I was at the man's mercy, I fully expected to be released or to escape, and I felt that I did not fear him either physically or morally. I therefore answered him as

bluntly as he had asked the question, that I had, and why I had.

To my surprise, his manner changed and he very politely explained that the room I was in was Mr. Disstow's, the silent partner in the firm, and that he was away on business. He further added that he was expecting him back at any minute.

To this falsehood I said :

"I presume private business?"

Nodding, he withdrew.

My opinions were fully strengthened by this interview, and to fortify myself still further I drew up to the keyhole at the door next the dining-room, upon hearing them at tea, and listened intently, eagerly catching every loud word that would reach me.

This bit of eavesdropping procured for me the intelligence that they were expecting the very despatch that I had upon my person, and that they were delayed in some movement by not receiving it. I also learned that the other man was "Dr. Kingsbury."

The whole conspiracy was now so plain to me, that, with the keynote in my possession, I had only to file my complaint with the proper authorities to enable me to fully avenge all my own wrongs, besides releasing and restoring to liberty the victim of a vile conspiracy.

Whatever preparations I might have wished to make, looking to my escape, I was compelled to forego, not only on account of the darkness which was now falling, but also because any noise I might make would certainly be overheard.

I began to think, and reconnoitered while I thought. I carefully examined the windows and outside surroundings and procured at the last minute, before throwing myself on the bed in my prison, the additional sheets from the spare bed and carefully concealed them. Planning and projecting my further movements, I fell asleep.

Upon awakening I found on the table a plentiful supply of food and a note, stating that the family had gone away for the day, and would be back at nightfall.

This meant that I would not be visited again, though I knew the place was watched, having seen a watchman on the grounds.

However, it gave me the chance I wanted, and I thoroughly scrutinized the bars and windows during the morning. I found that in the back room I could, by working out the mortar between the coping, push out the cross-standard at both the top and bottom of the grating. This would enable me to gain an opening just wide enough to push through. The sheeting I intended to join and fasten to the bottom bars.

By raising the lower sash I was able to pick out the mortar confining the cross-standard, using a steel paper-cutter and a heavy weight. Lowering the top sash I did the same with the upper standard.

Returning to the turret-room I left the bedstead at a sufficient distance from the wall to enable me to open the door and squeeze through.

I completed my task at about four o'clock, and then sat down to await darkness, and to time the watchman on his rounds. I found that it took him three-quarters of an hour, and that he passed around from right to left.

All the time I was wondering what was Harry's condition. I imagined that he was faring as well, at any rate, as myself. I believed that he was locked in the corresponding tower on the opposite end.

After darkness set in, I began to consider when "my friends" would return. As it grew later, it dawned on me that they did not intend to return.

It was near nine o'clock, and very dark, so, acting on this supposition, and knowing that I had no time to lose, if my surmise was correct, I proceeded to make a rope

from the sheets of the bed, and to remove the grating from the window I had selected from which to lower myself. As there was another window just below, I had to be careful not to allow the rope to dangle in front of it until I was ready to make a swift descent.

Everything being in readiness, I waited for the watchman. In a few minutes he came across the lawn, glanced over the building and passed down the factory wall, swinging his lantern as he went.

Giving him ten minutes' grace, I lowered myself past the window below my room, and which I noticed had neither curtain nor blinds. Touching the ground, I tried to disengage the rope, but could not, and so left it hanging.

Rapidly following the house-walls, I reached the factory section and the fenced portion of the grounds. I tried to look in at the windows, but they were just above my head, so could not.

I reached the confines of the grounds safely and, following a fringe of wood, reached the highway and made my way to the town. Not being familiar with the country, I lost some time, as I had to inquire the way several times, and my unkempt appearance, together with the hour of the night, made me a suspicious character.

Once in the village I hunted up the local justice and laid my case before him. He had the grace to accept my statement, more, perhaps, from the fact that the "castle," as the country folks called it, had always been looked upon with dread, than from any confidence he placed in me.

Hunting up the constable and aides we traveled back to my late prison, pressing into service a dilapidated "carry-all." We were all well armed, and had lanterns, an ax and a crow bar.

You may be sure that I was plied with any number of questions, but, outside of the necessary statements to constitute the proper legal charge, I said little.

We went up to the front of the house and made a search for the watchman. He was not found, and I think the sight of the rope from the turret window told him of my escape. Afraid of being captured, he made his escape. We returned to the door and knocked, but received no answer. Trying the door, it opened without any trouble, and I again found myself in the gloomy offices, with telephones, the box covered with the queer design in matting, and the desk.

Meeting with no opposition we went up the flight of stairs to the doorway, through which Harry had so mysteriously disappeared, and found it unlocked. Opening it, we found ourselves in a small room, with a door leading into another room. This door we found locked, but as we tried the knob, we heard Harry calling. I was overjoyed to hear his voice, and felt greatly relieved.

We burst open the door in short order, and found him none the worse for his imprisonment. I need not say he was rejoiced to see me. The room he was in corresponded to the one in the opposite turret where I had been confined, but was devoid of furniture save a bed and table.

Harry stated that when he tried the door, on the Friday previous, it readily opened showing, as I had also seen, the light in the room beyond. As he opened the inner door, the outer one was shut by a person in the room, while another seized him and pushed him in the inner room, the door being locked after him. The whole transpired so suddenly that he had no time for resistance.

From his description the two men must have been Dingley and Dr. Kingsbury. When they brought him his supper he was told that he was wanted for safety to themselves.

We all went back to the dining-room, when I found the box and papers, and took possession of them. There being no further use for our staying where we were, we decided

to return to New York, and to place the matter in the hands of a detective agency.

We learned from the justice and constable that a train had left the Junction at five o'clock that night and that the next one was scheduled for ten o'clock the next morning.

As it would be unsafe to travel over the mountains by night, we decided to stay in the house to await the possible return of Dingley and Kingsbury, although we felt pretty certain that they had left for parts unknown.

Before daylight we made a visit to the factory, going in by way of the back door in the lower office. The sight that met our eyes confirmed our suspicions as to the departure of the conspirators. Every piece of the delicate and valuable machinery had been smashed and removed, and not a vestige of a diamond did we find.

The next morning, leaving affairs with the justice in such a shape that he could have them brought before the grand jury at its next sitting, Harry and I drove over to the Junction in time for the ten o'clock train back to New York. At the station we inquired if any one had left by train the day previous, but from descriptions given us we were sure that none of the passengers were our friends. We learned afterward that the team connected with the "castle" had been found at a hotel near the railroad crossing a considerable distance away.

Home again, I laid the entire matter before my firm and they very energetically pushed the search for Charles Disstow.

After considerable advertising they placed themselves in correspondence with a private asylum in West Virginia, and the release of Charles Disstow resulted. Upon investigation it was proven that he was not or never had been insane, having been placed in the asylum by Dingley and Kingsbury after they had learned of his inheritance, which they hoped by this means to secure.

Upon his release Mr. Disstow went direct to New York, where he was given all his papers, etc. He soon thereafter established his identity, and received the full amount as cabled to his credit from Liverpool.

The accounts of my firm which he knew to be correct, were settled in full, and a new factory started nearby, in which he manufactured all fine instruments for scientific purposes. Much material was brought from the "castle," and the place was left to decay. . Nothing was ever heard of the arch conspirators who were foiled by our timely intervention.

As for myself and Harry, we would not sell our interest in the Disstow Manufacturing Company for a large sum.

LITTLE NELL.

LITTLE NELL.

HOW differently we see things after a space of years ! The lapse of time, the experiences of life and their lessons leave impressions,—good or bad,—that make or mar the serenity of old age.

Once past the halycon days, advanced in life, not one but has recalled, under some condition or other, the youthful scenes or recollections of home surroundings, of cherished ones,—father, mother, sister, brother, a near relative,—or of a particular incident in connection with home life.

Recalling my own experiences, I remember several episodes in a child's life, which, while they amused at the time, were forgotten until the thoughts of youth crowded upon a mind engaged with sterner pursuits.

Nellie, dear little tot, was the child of tenants on my father's farm. I recollect coming upon her one morning, bare of foot and dirty, sobbing as though her little heart would break. Her chubby little cheeks were streaked with dust and tears, and her frock was dirty and torn.

"Why, Nell," I asked, "what in the world is the matter? What are you crying about?"

It was a long time before she would answer, but finally she blurted out, between her sobs:

"Dad,—he—he whipped 'ee!"

She would not say more, and somehow I really felt sorry for her and her childish woes.

With some coaxing she began to smile and peep through her dirty fingers at me. When I had won her confidence I took her home.

"Dear me, Edith! who have you there?" exclaimed mother.

Father near burst his sides laughing at what he called my "stray cosset." Dear old man! Many a time has he put himself out to make it bright for others.

Nell was a sturdy little urchin, as straight as an arrow, and full of grit. Washed and with a clean "fo'ck," as she called it, she was a surprise, and it was not long before she was a favorite with all.

She very quickly got over her shyness, and became thoroughly spoiled, and the centre of attraction. And she soon knew her importance.

The boys teased and spoiled her entirely. Mother petted her. Father gave her pennies until her eyes shone with the unexpected wealth. To me she always came when in trouble.

"Edie, 'oo love 'ee," she would say nestling her golden head close to me, where she would stay, as quiet as a mouse.

"Edie 'pit -fire," she would say when she saw me provoked at anything. "At 'oo mean? 'Oo bad," and then would look so sorry and sweet that I would catch her up and hug her, in a good humor immediately.

Nell's blue eyes were full of mischief, and fairly danced if able to execute some plan of her own directly in opposition with all accepted ideas of correctness.

"If I could on'y f'ow straight," she wailed, "I don't care nucken to kick a foot-ball, if could on'y f'ow."

She was very imitative,—for good or bad,—and the shocking things she would do and say, as she learned them from all hands, made mother hold up her hands in horror. But even for the bad things she would do,—in her innocence,—one was unable to punish her.

I remember once, in particular, when Thomas, the groom, was attending a sick horse, Nell watched him pour the necessary medicine down the not very willing animal's throat. With hands behind her back, Nell watched the operation without a word.

Later in the morning, we wanted her. Calling and getting no answer, we hunted high and low. After a diligent search, we found her at the kennel of a big mastiff.

The dog sat upon his haunches, his front paws braced solidly, with Nell tugging at his mouth; in her hand she had a bottle of Thomas' horse medicine, vainly trying to pour its contents down Jack's mouth, repeating:

"Ope' 'ee mouse, ope 'ee mouse, and take 'ee med'sin'! Will 'ee ope' 'ee mouse, I say?"

And she would stamp her foot and hang on, not in the least afraid, while Jack and the numerous other dogs enjoyed the performance with almost human intelligence.

The same dogs had a good meal at Nell's expense one day, and it happened this way.

Father had been making presents of provisions to some of his tenants, and Nell as usual, knew all about the affair.

Later in the day we heard a great commotion, and, looking out of the window, saw Nell kicking and commanding the pack to desist from stealing a huge ham from her.

"Loose it, I say, loose it!" she ordered of Jack, as he made a grab at the choice morsel, upsetting Nell, who clung to the ham for dear life.

"I'uz going to div it to Mis' Haynes," she sobbed as we rescued her and her precious load, "she poor, and ain't got nucken, and they gone and dirtied it all," and her eyes flamed and she looked daggers at the dogs.

"Well," said father, as he gazed at the wreck, "there goes one of my best hams, but I suppose it's all right."

Nell was the soul of generosity, and a fit act of hers, on a par with the ham episode, was when she came home from the gipsy camp in the hollow, with nothing on but a short slip, having given all the rest of her clothes and her shoes and stockings to a ragged little gipsy child.

Did the boys tease or threaten her with a whipping, she would up with her fist and say, "'Oo dare! Me tell Edie!"

If she wanted to go anywhere, she went. Did coaxing fail, assertion didn't, and not one could resist her.

After she had been around us for over a year, father was taken sick and had to lie abed most of the time. Nell was, as you can readily imagine, the life of the sick room; and when the spring flowers first appeared, early every morning the child would gather all she could and bring them to the steps leading to his room, saying:

"Is 'oo up yet? I got 'oo fr'owers. May I tum in?"

"All right Nell, come up!" would be her bidding to come.

"All yite! I's a-tummin'," and soon her cheery face appeared, hugging in her arms the thoughtful gift.

Up before all in the morning, she came over to the house, and, if I was late in coming down, she would stand at the foot of the stairs and call out, "Does I see b'ight eyes tummin' down 'tairs!" Edie, I mean 'oo—does I see b'ight eyes tummin' down 'tairs?"

Like the rest, she too had sickness, being troubled with throbbing headaches. Many a time have I held her head for hours to comfort and ease her, her appreciative disposition craving untold caresses when ill.

It is a long time since last I saw little Nell. That last time was under peculiar circumstances, and, true to her nature and affection, she left with me words that have been dearly cherished.

I have been far from home since, but my recollections have been many, and my thoughts deep.

As for little Nell, my heart yearned towards her when I came across her sobbing, and in distress; she is older now, but it yearns for her to-day.

God grant that her paths have been the paths of peace and pleasantness!

She made joy to enter the hearts of others.

THE OCTOPUS SYNDICATE 1900.

THE OCTOPUS SYNDICATE 1900.

SIX or eight men sat playing at the seductive game of poker in a cosy room in one of the largest clubs in New York. Poker is the pet game of the very wealthy, but it doesn't interest them long. They are too sharp to involve themselves deeply, and on account of their reputation few care to take a hand with them. So when our friends had lost and paid with their I. O. U.'s all they felt able to lose that day, and the player who found himself ahead of the game was explaining that his winnings just made him even, they fell to complaining about the hard times and wondering what they should do next to set them on their feet.

You see these men were all peers in the financial world. Putting into a little corner all the gold, silver, trusts and commodities of the country, and squeezing out the where-withal to buy a state, an ocean or other little plaything, was as nothing to them. They were tired of it. Beside, they had taught so many their same tricks, that the pupils were a little further advanced than the teachers. This made them all wary, where once they trod boldly, and it was as hard to get up a deal as it was a little game of bluff.

Another thing, each would have liked to make a start where he was not well known. Dodging cranks, dynamite bombs and pistol balls, threatened to occupy all their spare time, and he was certainly not a healthy occupation.

While sipping, lemonade-claret and mint julip and munching pretzles after the game, a small, keen-eyed young man appeared upon the scene and began talking in an excited manner.

This small, keen-eyed man had everything at his fingers ends. Knew everybody ; what they thought ; what their friends thought ; what people didn't think ; and what they should think. The financiers world was a huge checker-board to him, on which he could see all the moves of the mightiest schemes on foot. In fact, he knew everybody's business, and if he didn't, made it his business to find out, even if he had to accuse them of a lie to make them tell the truth. His stairway to his position as leader of this choice coterie savored strongly of a paneling of blasted hopes—not his own however, and each step bore some device that to-day is not as strange as it was in the time of which I speak. At any rate, he gave out that he had just obtained possession of facts that would enable them to purchase valuable tracts of unclaimed land, covering about three hundred thousand miles in area, for a mere nothing. What then? Well, that he should keep to himself unless they agreed to go in with him and make the purchase. If they would, he had one of the grandest schemes to propose that man ever conceived, much less undertook to execute.

All agreeing, he named the price at which he could purchase if they would but raise the money. This set them to thinking. One said he was a little strapped, but had a franchise to cross the tracks of the S. & P. railroad line. He would begin to construct his road and he thought the S. & P. people would be glad to have him quit ; this he would—for a consideration.

Another had charge of the estates of some widows and orphans. He thought he could manage to possess nearly all the equity by the time the money should be needed. Another was a director in a bank, and knew he could vote himself a sum sufficient to hold up his end. And finally, the pool was turned over to the small, keen-eyed young man, who made the purchase. A company was then formed, with sweeping articles of incorporation ; the shares,

in blocks, having "In consideration for property purchased" marked all across their face.

Then he unfolded his scheme, which, after its magnitude, was fully understood, was heartily applauded by the coterie, who then adjourned for lunch.

One day, after weeks of planning and hard work, a special railway train carried a party of gentlemen on a little trip, of perhaps a thousand miles. *En route* they were all the time examining charts and maps and consulting important-looking legal documents with red seals and tape and scrawling names and lots of typewriting. Every man's face wore a triumphant but weary look. On one map, that which they turned to most frequently, was a perfect square, outlined in blue ink.

In the centre, was unmistakably a site for a large city. About it was plenty of space, allowing for steady growth in size. At stated intervals were other cities laid out and named, streets and all. About the whole, following the square, was a wide margin or roadway. At certain points in all the towns as laid out could be seen black squares and oblong stretches. At intervals along the outer margin, the three large rivers, and at other places was the word "reserved." Arriving at the central site in the territory, weeks of surveying, locating, plotting and planning ensued, and then actual work began.

First, the Syndicate Real Estate, Mortgage, Loan Investment and Title Company was furnished with handsome quarters in the central city; a fire and life insurance company was formed; then a railroad main line was built, running straight across the square, connecting with all the important lines in touch with the east and west.

A complete electric railway ran about the space marked "roadbed" in the map, and had branches to and from all of the towns.

Easily reached by rail, at various intervals were estab-

lished brick yards, stone quarries, foundries, glass works and other industries sufficient for the immediate needs of the territory.

Each town was equipped with wholesale lumber yard, grocery, liquor store, abattoir, drug house, theatres, churches, gas manufactures and electric light plants and waterworks were also established.

These, as above set forth and as thought of from time to time, were owned by the syndicate and controlled by one of the members and numerous assistants—all in the family.

There was some serious talk of putting the sun and moon on a string, so that they could be then better controlled, but as the wishes of the members themselves might not agree, to promote harmony this idea was abandoned.

In establishing a government that of a monarchy was followed as closely as possible. Of course some deviations made and respect for several customs were adhered to for the sake of their good effect. The seat of executive power was at the central city. The smaller towns were governed by a Mayor, three citizens, constituting a governing board, a board of assessors, a police force and a fire department.

The head man at the central city was the small, keen-eyed young man, and the heads and boards in the other cities were controlled by members of the syndicate.

Tax rates were then fixed, railroad rates scheduled and the general policy mapped out.

Finally, everything being in readiness, couriers were despatched far and near to notify and to attract settlers to this elysium created for their benefit.

Free excursions were inaugurated, balloons sent up and every possible attraction advanced to induce merchants and others to take up with the new innovation.

The Syndicate Real Estate, Mortgage, Loan Investment and Title Company opened its office and did a thriving business.

All the lots and parcels of land not reserved sold rapidly. Money was loaned at heavy premiums.

Frame houses, brick houses and stone houses were erected like a story in the Arabian Nights tales. If for any reason the builders were unable to pay for material, a mortgage was made to the syndicate covering the amount of the expense. Should the interest not be forthcoming the syndicate simply took the property as it stood, and rented it or sold it. Everything was high in price, because of extra quality, so there was little equity after a property was sold at public sale.

After the back lots were sold then commenced the bargaining for the principal lots on the main streets and along the railroads and rivers. These, of course, were owned by the small, keen-eyed young man and his friends, and were mortgaged to the government to avoid tax rates.

Money commenced to roll into the coffers of the various branches of enterprise controlled by the syndicate. Gas was furnished at the rate of five dollars per thousand feet and electricity at two dollars per hundred amperes, measured through patent windmill metres that revolved ceaselessly, and prices were still advancing.

Sundry improvements, such as sewer systems, street paving, etc., were advocated and laid out at the expense of the cities, the work being done by contractors in the employ of the syndicate and charged to the properties benefited. The people were real tame and made no objections. Any sign of opposition to the moves of the syndicate, or the concerns owned by them, resulted in the would-be oppositionists having their interest and premiums increased. If a rival concern did start, the tax assessors looked to it that their franchise was very valuable.

Only consumers were wanted. The syndicate felt thoroughly able to fill all the offices of producers.

As their holdings decreased, taxes and prices on coal, water, gas, etc., increased.

Things went on thus for a number of years and the accounts of the chartered company were enlarged in round numbers to several hundred billion dollars and were still increasing.

Ordinary mortals, after such signal and material triumphs, would have been satisfied. Not so with the syndicate, however. Their goal was yet to be reached. Those on the top wave were so well satisfied that no attention whatever was paid to the thundering mutterings of the populace. Some wise heads in the rank and file began to obtain insight into the methods being employed, and thought it high time to have the enormous profits of the syndicate curtailed. There were no geese to cackle to save Rome. There is always a turning point in lives of individuals and in the management of affairs, that portend for good or evil, for failure or success. It is generally a simple thing, but it is effectual. The more trifling it appears the better entering wedge it is and commences a swelling that is "visible."

There came over the people an insane desire to become the possessors of little patent pinwheels. Each pinwheel having a balloon attached. Men, women and children went wild over the baubles and would have them at any cost. This fad, reaching the ears of the syndicate, they bought the patent at an enormous sum and started their manufacture, erecting large works throughout the territory. Of course, the balloons attached to the pinwheels, caused large numbers to be carried into air, and the rain and dampness spoiled countless thousands besides. At certain intervals the manufacture of the toys was stopped, when prices immediately advanced. Like every other fad, however,

this one, too, died out. The syndicate tried to hedge, but it was impossible, and it lost something like a hundred thousand dollars—an enormous sum, in connection with a number of large plants, perfectly useless for any other business. Just prior to the collapse of the concern a dividend having been declared, one stockholder, grabbing some outstanding bills, went out collecting. After getting enough to satisfy his claim he returned to the office, and, tightly holding fast to the bank notes, begged to be allowed to keep his due. Something must be done to retrieve this loss, or the members would all be sick worrying over it.

A consultation was had as quickly as the corporators could be gotten together. It was made up of excited individuals, who finally cooled down as wise heads again planned. The following policy was then adopted:

Large tracts of outlying territory were laid out and controlled by the syndicate, who then got their henchmen to order the railroad tracks placed in other sections of the cities. This order, of course, was obeyed, the syndicate being allowed indemnity for the loss of its franchise. They then ran their roads through the new section, selling the lots held by them at an enormous advance.

The job completed, sewers were ordered taken up and larger ones to meet the requirements of increased population, were elected to be laid. Paved streets were ordered repaved with a noiseless block newly invented by the syndicate. Also after a system of power had been adopted, land was sold along the rivers, and here again the coterie came in.

A financial statement being made up, the assets of the concern showed a profit of five hundred millions, a slight advance over the last statement.

But now the mutterings of the people began to assume the proportions of a war.

Everything they had to use was becoming a burden on account of the cost. They asked for cheaper gas, water,

taxes—and met with no responsive treatment. The syndicate would brook no dictation. Indeed, they organized a new system of steam heating and compelled the citizens to adopt it. Should the receipts fall off, an explosion or two would occur in the town, causing great destruction to life and property.

This did not matter to the syndicate. It was thus enabled to sell lots in its local cemeteries. A sale of bricks, lumber, stone, etc., also resulted. As for the damage done, that was assessed upon the surviving property owners, or estates adjacent, to recompense the syndicate for losses sustained.

Finally, things came to such a pass that mass meetings were held to protest. The syndicate members, finding that they were on delicate ground, held a meeting for the purpose of discussing the situation. All sorts of propositions for restoring the public confidence were advanced, but rejected. At last the small, keen-eyed young man arose and said: "Gentlemen, there is but one more move for us to make. We have been successful, but our efforts are not being appreciated. The people, whom we have made prosperous and happy, are bent on undermining us. Let us abandon this loved spot. I advise that we send to New York all our available funds and to commence negotiations to sell to the territory all our rights, titles and interests. Should this meet with your approval I have one more proposition to make, whereby we can add to our accumulations, which, although quite considerable, are hardly adequate for our needs. I have during the past few months been securing a patent on a wind driving and air storage accumulator. With this I had proposed to store all the air needed for our elysium, to be distributed through tubes to the populace at so much per thousand feet. You, of course, will see the economy of this device over the enormous amount of air now wasted. In return we should net a fair profit. Now, however, I will give the invention to the syndicate and

make the following proposition: On the outside of our domain let us erect a massive air reservoir of gigantic proportions, according to the formula I hand you herewith to resist pressure and expansion.

"Let us then sell this and the patented wind-driving and air-storing accumulator to a company. We had better not handle it ourselves. This company can easily raise the money from the grasping people by whom we are surrounded, by issuing five century bonds to be satisfied by yearly drawings for the amount of bond and accumulations for five hundred years. This savors of chance and will have plenty of supporters who will expect to realize on their holdings before they die.

This is their bent. It is self-control they are after. It will result in their ultimate downfall.

Let us give it to them.

Are you satisfied with this?"

Knowing that it was a last chance anyhow, the motion was put and carried. The company was formed as agreed upon, and the judgment of the small, keen-eyed young man proved correct. There was a big scramble for stock on the basis as planned. The syndicate announced their intentions in reference to relinquishing the territory to the control of the people, and took Central City bonds for all their possessions that could not be sold.

The people became easier in mind and breathed more freely now that they were to take the helm.

But their security was shortlived.

The air-accumulator people, having perfected their plans, notified the residents in the territory that for twenty-four hours they would have enough air to breathe to sustain life; by that time all the air would be driven and stored in their reservoir, from whence it could be obtained only by tubing and metering for the necessary supply.

Many openly rebelled and threatened to hold out against

this curtailment of their enjoyments. Others expostulated, but where was the use ?

During the afternoon of the all-important day, the syndicate, in company with the proprietors of the Air Accumulator Company, drove out to the immense reservoir, where the last payment for the patents were to be made. After the ceremony at the foot of the massive walls, and a quiet jollification, the party prepared to depart. They had just started, when a terrible noise was heard.

Looking upward, air in the form of steam was seen issuing from the walls. The air pressure and gases were too great for the structure.

A theory of the human mind was again at fault.

All present recognized the importance of getting away. But too late.

With a rush and a roar the walls gave way, covering up and obliterating everything within reach.

The people breathed again. It was close to the expiration of the time allowed by the Air Accumulator people that the accident occurred, and those who repaired to the scene of the disaster had little sympathy to express. They went back to their towns, adjusted their affairs to suit themselves, and applied to the Government for admission to Statehood. This was granted after long delays.

The money deposited in New York by the syndicate reverted to the Government. It was used to reduce the national debt, soldiers' widows were pensioned, the President's salary increased, the Indians better cared for, a larger navy built, silver again purchased at a dollar for sixty-seven cents worth, and three per cent. gold bonds issued throughout the United States.

These bonds were gobbled up by a syndicate, who sold them to English capitalists.

It looked black for England for a while, for war was contemplated to get the gold back again.

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It was not until a Republican President was elected to look after the interests of the people, that harmony was again restored and peace assured.





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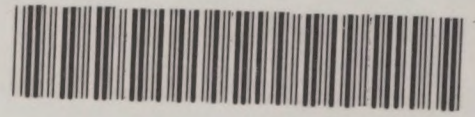
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